

The Koran Handbook: An Annotated Translation

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by

Nicolas Starkovsky

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

A Note from the Author

This translation of the Koran is the achievement of my life. Its source is in my youth in Egypt. But I was able to approach the Koran closely only in my forties, after I had acquired life experience, spiritual potential, and the desire to understand the Muslim Scripture. Now that the Word of the Koran has penetrated into my heart, I want to share my experience with others. Some comments on how I approached the prject are found in the Foreword. May the simple words of this translation bring to the reader the essence of Islam and uncover the reasons why millions of people in the contemporary world are attracted and tremendously influenced by this inspirational Book.

Being versed in both the Arabic and the Western cultures and languages, I am well qualified to translate the Koran. I was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1922 and I spent thirty-five years in that country before coming to the United States. My first language was Russian, Arabic was my third, and English — my fifth. I earned a doctorate degree at Cairo University and I took graduate courses in English at George Mason University in Virginia. Having cultivated my interest in Islam since my early youth, I have started this translation years ago when some of my friends, both in Egypt and the USA, both Muslims and non-Muslims, asked me to introduce them to the Koran. In the process of explaining the Koran to them, I gained a deep-seated appreciation for its wisdom and a better understanding of myself and my fellow man.

I am deeply indebted to my wife, Lilia Kurasheva Starkovsky, with whom I made a simultaneous translation of the Koran to Russian, for her advice, encouragement and poetic talent. I should also want to thank all the people who stimulated my interest in this work for over half of a century.

This book is dedicated to the generous peoples of Egypt and the United States of America, among whom I have equally shared my life.

The Koran as It Defines Itself
(In lieu of an epigraph)

Verily, this is the Holy Koran
in a well guarded Book.
It can be touched only by those who are purified.
This is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds!
(S.56:77-80)

Verily, this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.
The faithful Spirit descended with it
into your heart to make you warn
in the clear Arabic tongue,
as [revealed] in the Books of the Ancients.
(S.26:192-196)

In the past the Scripture of Moses
was a Guidance and a mercy.
This Scripture confirms it in the Arabic language.
It warns the wrong-doers
and brings good tidings to those who do right.
(S.46:12)

We have made the Koran easy to remember,
but who remembers [it] now?
(S.54:17)
Here are some Verses from the lucid Scripture
that We have sent down as an Arabic Koran —
perhaps you will understand!
(S.12:1-2)

Verily, We made [the Koran] easy in your tongue —
perhaps they will remember!
(S.44:58)

We have been sending a Messenger
only to give clear explanations
in the language of his people.
(S.14:4)

[This is] a Revelation from the Compassionate, the Merciful,
a Scripture with Verses made clear,
an Arabic Koran for the people who understand.
(S.41:2-3)

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Preface

The aim of this work is to give to the English reader an authentic translation of the Koran and to convey to him the essence of the Muslim Scripture, while preserving as much as possible of its specific flavor and its concise imagery.

At the mention of the Koran, one often hears such observations as: "Why should we read the Koran? Who can make sense of it, if many Arabs and Muslims do not read and understand it? Should we invest our time in reading a forbidding religious text when even the Bible is not easy to comprehend?"

This translation of the Koran is an attempt at answering these questions and an effort at making it available to a wide range of readers. It should make the Koran interesting, revealing, exciting to the reader who, be he believing, unbiased, skeptical, or hostile, will gain a new insight into the development of religious, social, and political thought in the contemporary world.

The cultural map of the Judeo-Christian-Muslim world extends over the five continents, with the exclusion of Hinduist/Buddhist cultures and a few animistic pockets in Africa and the Pacific.

The Koran is the spiritual and cultural inheritance of millions of people. It is built upon the faith and the ethics of the Old and New Testaments, so that any denizen of the Western world should feel that the Koran belongs to the same cultural tradition, the beneficiaries of which can come to terms with each other to end wars, hatred, derision, terrorism, and persecutions that have disgraced humanity for centuries of discord.

The reading of the third installment of our tradition — the Koran — will help even those who had not studied the Bible and the Gospels to defuse in a personal way the enmity between the three religions that sustain the same ideals, laws and spiritual values and to gain an objective understanding of what is shared by the different cultures that seem to be so inimical to each other in the modern world.

Each religious tradition has its "Book": Judaism — the Torah, Christianity — the Old and New Testaments, and Islam — the Koran. For a Muslim, the Koran is a prescriptive Revelation from God communicated through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad during his mission in Arabia in 610-632; it is also a spiritual and moral guide and the foundation of social and political life.

The collection of sermons, stories, parables, exhortations and prescriptions that constitute the Koran is considered to be the creation of God. From the point of view of a devout Muslim, the Koran, being perfect and complete, contains everything of value to man; it teaches mankind how to live in righteousness and deserve a reward in the Hereafter.

The Koran calls to strict monotheism, expressed in five acts of faith, the so-called "pillars" of Islam: belief in one God, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca (the **hajj**) at least once in a lifetime. The chanting of the Koran, inherent to each of these obligations, is a devotional act, remotely resembling a religious service.

In the Koran, God and man exist on totally different planes. Whereas in the Bible, God talks directly to the Prophets (thus supporting the idea of a "personal God"), in the Koran, God talks to the Prophet Muhammad through an intermediate "Spirit" (Gabriel). If the theme of the Koran is the relationship between God and man, then the Prophet Muhammad is only an instrument of the transmission of this connection to man.

Inspired by the idea of monotheism, the Prophet preached his faith with the zeal of an innovator who would rather be imprisoned, declared insane, or killed rather than accept a compromise. By his incessant missionary work he became the founder, the mover, and the leader of one of the most powerful and cohesive religious and political forces in modern history.

The Prophet Muhammad (May God accept his prayers and grant him peace! — a greeting that traditionally follows his name) was a merchant of the prominent Meccan tribe of Quraish at the crossing of east-west trade roads from the city of Taif to the Red Sea port of Djedda and north-south roads from Damascus and Jerusalem down to Yemen and the Indian Ocean.

At the beginning of the VIIth century — the century of the Prophet Muhammad — Arabia supported innumerable agricultural or nomadic tribes and clans. Most of the tribes were pagan, but there were some enclaves of Jews and Christians who were more on the fringes than in the mainstream of their own faiths. The idea of one

supreme God existed even among the idolaters, yet the sanctuary of Mecca was consecrated to hundreds of divinities. Prominent among them were a few female idols: the guardian angels of birth and fertility.

In the center of the "sacred temple" stood a masonry shrine, the **Ka'ba**, believed to have been built by the ancestors of Arabs: Abraham and his son Ishmael. The shrine attracted crowds of worshippers of all creeds during the yearly pilgrimage months when all wars were banned. The Meccan shrines were managed by the Hashemite clan of the Quraish tribe, for which guarding and maintaining them was a lucrative business. Since the economic prosperity of this clan depended on the support received from different groups and sects represented by their idols, the appeal to monotheism by the Prophet Mohammed was bitterly opposed by his tribesmen.

The Koran, a synthesis of man's highest spiritual quests, appeared in a region where communication was assured by the already well developed Arabic language. The text of the Koran, however, can be baffling in the extreme for the unprepared reader, especially if its 114 chapters are read in their canonical order. These chapters (**suras**) have been assembled more or less in the order of their length, starting with the longest (usually the latest) and ending with the shortest (usually the earliest). Under these conditions, the embedded scant historical and liguistic markers can't help the reader to get his bearings, but if the Koran is read in the thematic and chronological order proposed in these pages, it is easy to grasp the Muslim Scripture in its development from the simplest ideas to the most complex moral, ethical and legal prescriptions. To further help the reader, each translated sura is accompanied by a short introduction and a few pertinent notes.

It should be emphasized that this book cannot be called the "English Koran." No book can exist under such a contradictory title, as there is only one Koran, the Arabic one.

No consistent attempt will be made in this book at teaching the correct pronunciation of Arabic words. Half-knowledge is no knowledge at all. Therefore, we start by calling the Koran by its traditional English-language name and not Alkoran, Qur'an or Qur'aan.

bismil-lah ar-rahman ar-rahim

FOREWORD

I am offering this translation of the Koran to the general reader because the existing versions are either too free or too academic. They may be scholarly, literary, highly emotive or poetic, but they do not sound or feel authentic. This rendition is faithful both to the words of the original and to their deeper meaning. It uses a language that most people understand, and it is arranged in a novel way that makes its perusal not only thought-provoking and informative, but also enjoyable.

The general reader would easily lose his way in the Koran if he tried to follow the translations now on the market. For all their merits, they lack the necessary uncluttered step-by-step guidance which is provided in this translation. I urge the reader to follow this guidance if he wants to benefit from this Book.

My innovation consists in arranging the chapters of the Koran thematically and chronologically, so that they proceed from the simplest concepts to the most complicated ones and from the earliest to the latest. In no way the transposition of the suras does violate the integrity of the Koran. Each chapter is preceded by a short summary or introduction and is followed by brief Notes that place it in the proper context and lead the reader to the next chapter. These Notes seem to be justified by the Koran itself, since it pauses at times to explain the words that could have sounded unfamiliar to the first Muslims. For example: “The Disaster! And what is the Disaster? How to explain the Disaster to you? It is the Day when men shall be scattered like moths…” (S.101:1-4).

In my comments, I give priority to the traditional Muslim ideology and I carefully avoid adapting the Koran to a modern way of thinking or presenting it as a solution to our present social, economic, or political ills. And, yes, I am fascinated by the Koran and I have derived immense satisfaction from working on it.

Much effort has been devoted to making the text of the Koran easy to read and to recite. This is important because the Koran is meant to be read aloud. Reading the Koran "in measure" and its chanting are the basic sources of popular faith and inspiration.

After a first acquaintance with the Koran in this book, the reader can find satisfaction in re-reading it in its traditional order established by its first editors, from its first chapter, "The Opening Sura" to the last one, "The People."

N.A.S.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELEVANT TO THE KORAN
(Years of the Muslim calendar are followed by the letter H)

A.D. 578	Birth of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca. His tribe is the Quraish and his clan, the Hashemites.
612	Beginning of his public life in Mecca among his tribesmen, the Quraish.
622	The **hijra**: emigration of the Prophet to Yathrib, soon to be renamed Medina. The beginning of the Muslim era.
623, 1 H	Consolidation of Islam in Medina with the help of the Emigrants from Mecca (the Muhajjirun) and the local faithful (the Ansar).
624, 2 H	Victory over the Meccans at Badr south of Medina.
625, 3 H	Severe setback for the Muslims in a battle against the Meccans at Uhud in the vicinity of Medina; the Prophet is wounded, but Medina is saved.
626, 4 H	Successful campaign against the Jewish tribe Bani Nadir, an ally of the Meccans.
627, 5 H	Victory over the attacking Meccans in the "War of the Trenches" at Medina; a successful campaign against the Jewish tribe Bani Quraiza.
628, 6 H	Truce with the Meccans at Hudabiya; growth of Islam; civil war against the "Hypocrites" and the Nomads.
629, 7 H	Defeat of Jewish tribes at Khaibar; appeal to neighboring nations to join Islam; the Prophet's pilgrimage to Mecca under a truce.
630, 8 H	Conquest of Mecca by the Prophet; the battle of Hunain and the expedition to the eastern city of Taif.
631, 9 H	Subjugation of the remaining Christian, Jewish and pagan groups. Expedition to Tabuk, north of Medina.
632, 10 H	Consolidation of the Islamic state; last pilgrimage of the Prophet to Mecca and his death in Medina.
651.	The first and definitive edition of the Koran produced by the relatives and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

Description of the Koran

What is the Koran? — For a Muslim, it is the speech of God descended upon the Prophet Muhammad during the two decades of his mission, permanently recorded within fifteen years of his death.

Described as "the Mother of Scriptures" (S.13:39) or "the source of Scripture" (S.43:4), the Koran is much more than a compendium of religious prescriptions. Its text is wowen into each prayer and act of Muslim worship, and is endlessly recited in all religious settings. It is a hymn and a prayer, it is a state Constitution, it is a pledge of allegiance to Islam. Its reverent recital in a mosque can be compared not only to the reading of the Scriptures in synagogues and churches, but to a Jewish service or a Christian sacrament.

The Koran consists of 114 chapters or "**suras**" varying in length from three to 286 verses, totaling 6244 verses. Only a few suras cover just one topic; most of the others are highly complex and contain re-statements and illustrations of previously presented material. For those who want to read the Koran in one month, the Arabic original is divided into thirty parts by special marks in the margins.

Since many suras are made of passages revealed to the Prophet at different stages of his mission, it is next to impossible to re-arrange all the suras chronologically. This task has been attempted rather loosely on the basis of comparative linguistics, trends in rhetoric, and the analysis of historical references that surface here and there, especially in the later suras. In the XIX century, Rodwell divided the suras into four groups: the poetic suras, the "Compassionate" (**ar-rahman**) suras characterized by the frequent occurence of this word, the prophetic suras, and the late suras. This division is too superficial to be of value. Later, Bell, a literalist, has tried to disentangle the different "fragments" in the suras. However, this approach makes the Koran seem still more forbidding, especially for the beginner.

In this translation the suras are divided into seven groups according to their thematic content:

I. The Foundation of Islamic Belief

Short and early, these thirty-four suras establish the tenets of the Muslim faith. They stand out by their highly emotional content and poetic form. The verses are compact and incisive, and carry direct messages that can be easily understood when read in the proposed arrangement. They speak of One God, the Judgement Day, and the Afterlife, and define the basic rules of conduct by short and clear descriptions of virtue and evil. The existence of God is proven by the perfection of His Creation. The Koranic exortations to faith are not directed to reason as much as to man's longings, emotions, and imagination. The suras of this group are replete with depictions of the attributes of God, Who is merciful to the believers and vengeful toward the sinners. The suras also inform us about the mission of the Prophet and his initial rejection by the people of his native Mecca.

II. Eschatology and Apocalypsis

Longer than the preceding ones, but still highly emotional in content, the eighteen suras of this group dramatize the fate of man during and after the "inevitable" Day of Judgment. Descriptions of Hell and Paradise alternate with exhortations to ethical conduct and submission to the will of God. The reader is introduced to the Angels and the Jinn, the good and evil spirits of the "Unseen."

Eschatology is the religious doctrine of the last events that will take place at the farthest boundary (Gr.: eschaton) of time and space. This boundary is the veil that separates our world from the Unseen and prevents us from seeing Hell and Paradise. Muslim eschatological events are brief because the Last Day shall come when least expected and it will usher man directly into apocalyptic events.

Apocalypsis is the lifting of this veil (Gr. apokalupsis), and thus the revelation of the Unseen. The Koran aptly uses the metaphor of veils and curtains when it invites us to glimpse beyond the end of the world. Apocalypsis is not just a description of punishments for sins, but also an invitation to salvation.

The suras belonging to this group are not devoid of other Koranic elements. Apocalyptic visions blend with praises of God, exhortations to virtue and the prophetic stories that are the subject of the next group of suras. Some of the apocalyptic events described in the Koran could be cross-referenced with the prophetic Books of Daniel and Ezekiel, and the Revelation of St. John.

III. Stories about the Prophets

While an apocalypse forecasts the future after the end of the world, a prophesy predicts the historical future. The Koran compares the mission of the Prophet Mohammed to that of twenty-eight Biblical and non-Biblical Prophets or Messengers from Adam to Jesus. The point is made that God had been selecting men of high virtue to bring His Warning to the first men and to the descendants of Abraham: the Hebrews and the Arabs.

The lives and the missions of all the Prophets are seen as part of an uninterrupted tradition culminating in the descent of the Koran. Therefore, their stories share the same tonality and movement: they begin with statements that God had never judged a nation without first sending a Prophet with a Reminder, continue with descriptions of the tribulations of a people who neglected the divine Warnings, and end with an appeal to Muslims to learn from the examples of their predecessors in order to avoid their fate.

In the Prophetic stories, the Koran resembles the Bible in presenting a panorama of man's life from his origin to and beyond his death. In the Bible, the Prophetic missions are a succession of "historical" events with a detailed chronology that we may believe or not. The Koran presents the past as a succession of God's Signs that guide man to worship One God. Except for a few hints at some historical events in Arabia during the last ten years of the Prophet's preaching, chronology is missing. The Biblical characters are blurred because the focus is on their mission. Joseph is the only personage to whom a whole lengthy sura is devoted. The two most frequently mentioned Prophets are Moses and Abraham, but their personalities fade beside the importance of their religious experience, which was high in educational value for all of mankind.

Man is a passive bystander in the apocalyptic events, but in the seventeen prophetic suras he is an actor participating in debates and confrontations. The vivid dialogs and the startling developments in the stories take the listener from flights of vivid imagination to periods of contemplation and from overt poetry to rhymed prose. The onus of the stories is the uniqueness of God with emphasis on His Creation and his Compassion. This theme brings up a passionate castigation of the "Associators" — those who deny the uniqueness of God.

IV. Attitude Toward the Other Religions

The suras become more and more polemic. The brunt of the criticism are the "Associators" of all kinds who deviate from strict monotheism, to wit, the pagans and the Christians. In Jesus, the Koran sees a great Prophet, a great human being, who did not want to be worshiped like God. The Jews are not spared, either: they are accused of disrespecting their own laws, of presumptuously rejecting the Koran, and of joining the enemies of Islam.

Almost all of the fourteen suras of this group, together with parts of SS. 2, 3, and 6, are early and Meccan in content, belonging to the period that preceded the relocation of the Prophet to Medina. Re-statements increase in frequency; the verses increase in length, lose their haunting rhythm, and gradually merge into rhymed prose.

V. Doxologies

This short set of nine suras, reputedly of the late Meccan period, does not quite fit the other groups. The suras concentrate on praising God and extolling His compassion to man. They contain sermons consisting of Signs, Warnings, and some often repeated phrases, which by their changes in tone and mode of assembly, express shades of meaning that can be better appreciated in the beautiful and expressive Arabic text.

VI. Legal Matters

The seven suras gathered under this heading (together with parts of SS. 2, 4 and 6) describe the Muslim legal system in detail. The Koran shifts from teaching moral precepts to enunciating rules and laws in its version of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and becomes a Codex of Law (S.13:37; S.4:105).

The need for elaborate pronouncements results in long and ponderous verses sounding like prose, occasionally spiked with added rhymed phrases and sentences.

VII. The Conduct of Holy War

These eleven late Medinan suras, together with parts of SS. 3 and 4, deal with the organization of the Islamic nation and its military expeditions against its opponents in Arabia and on the boundaries of Byzantium and Persia. Fighting in the cause of God becomes the duty of all Muslims. The emerging state needs to be protected not only from foreign enemies, but also from the tepid or discontented Muslims — the Bedouins and the so-called "Hypocrites," who resist civil obedience and refuse to join the fight to spread the message of Islam across Arabia and beyond.

The sequence of the suras in this group can be established with some reliability thanks to the historical references they contain. The last suras of this group (SS. 9 and 110) exalt the achievements of the Prophet and forecast the triumph of Islam.

It is important to remember that the Koran is to be listened to and not only to be read silently. The emotional content of its verses requires an inspired oral transmission. This requirement led to the emergence in each Muslim community of skilled religious readers capable of chanting the Koran by heart and of enriching its rhythm and rhymes by voice modulations, dramatic pauses and breathing sounds.

The Koran is strikingly different in form and content from the Bible and the Gospels, even though Prophet Muhammad continued and completed the religion of the Peoples of the Book (as the Christians and Jews are collectively called).

For Muslims, the Koran is the recorded Word of God, from its initial stroke of the pen to the last. Coming from a single source and transmitted by one Prophet over only twenty years, the Koran focuses on a few sharply defined articles of faith and presents, unlike the other Scriptures — a monolithic Revelation with one Message, one Prophet, one God.

In contrast, the Old Testament is a discontinuous series of books widely different in style and subject matter, and the New Testament is a collection of oral accounts compiled long after the death of Jesus Christ and selected by contending religious factions over several generations. In the process, some books (the apocryphia) have been discarded, and others retained as God-inspired, according to the criteria of the first churches.

The Koran has been recorded during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. It was codified and published soon after his death by the people who had intimately known him and one another. The testimonies of doubtful value were discarded. Since the Koran has been revealed during a time replete with historical events, it reflects the Muslim ideas in creation and action. In turn, these events were likely to mold some of its ideas. Being God's Creation, the Koran can be changed through the infinite power of the Creator.

Secondly, the Koran is not only a collection of religious prescriptions, but a blueprint for social life, statehood, and an international unity in faith. No other Book has ever changed the customs and life of so many adherents as fast as the Koran.

Thirdly, in the form we read them nowadays, the Old and New Testaments have been translated and re-translated from one language to another (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and, later on, German, English, Church Slavonic...) with inevitable losses, glosses, distortions and editorial changes. The original Word of the Bible was irremediately dissolved, diluted and charged with new meanings, while the Koran has been preserved in its original edition. The first and only definitive written collection of its suras was published in A.D. 651, under the Khalif '**Othman,** with the help of the Prophet's secretary Zein Abu-sabit and some contemporaries of the Prophet who had committed passages of the Koran to memory and to written records. Each of them might have remembered the sacred verses in somewhat different versions, and so, as in the Bible, the reliable versions could have been reverently preserved side by side. This may explain some of the repetitions that are so characteristic of the Koran. Several centuries later, the Koran was issued in two canonical editions, the Turkish and the Egyptian, which differ from the original only by added vowel and diacritical signs, and by the splitting of a few verses resulting in a slight discrepancy in the number and enumeration of the verses, but not in their content or their order. The Egyptian Edition has been used throughout this translation.

It would be improper to submit to a rational critical analysis a Book meant to elevate the soul of its listener. Just as Genesis offers, side by side, two scenarios of the Creation or the Flood, the Koran may present numerous versions of a single dramatic event. The Koran cannot be treated like any literary genre — it does not belong to epics, poetry, lyrics, history, legends, fables, or tragedies. It is a genre by itself, the sum of all genres. It includes tragedy conveyed in lively dialogs, but its action seems to take place behind a curtain because the Koran does not dwell on the description of time and places. Therefore, the Koran should be looked at anagogically, as a simultaneous description of several layers of reality and several partially fused meanings.

The Biblical stories in the Koran frequently turn into fables — indeed, fables were popular in teaching. But fables are out of the historical context and Solomon, for example, may come before Moses in S.27, and after him in S.21, before Lot in S.27 and after Lot in S.21. The locale of Solomon's story is not indicated and his crystal palace is unreal. The story turns into a fable when Solomon talks to a bird and the ants speak among themselves in a human tongue he understands. In fact, the Koran focuses on Solomon's preaching of monotheism and the rest is there to attract the listener's attention. At first reading, one can get the impression that some suras are "hanging in the air," lacking in mood and in unifying purpose. But on closer look, almost each sura has an introduction, a conclusion, and an internal logic, if not a particular style. The Arab reader becomes totally immersed in the original text; a non-Arab reader should also be deeply involved in its meanings, if the words of the translation are authentic and the inspiration of the translator is true.

The Koran is revered by hundreds of millions of people because it provides hope and a deep emotional motivation. To this day, it is the foundation of Islam, even if Islamic thought has evolved through the centuries. Had this thought gelled in one immutable form, Islam would have been still-born. Thus, the reading of the Koran must be accompanied by the study of Islamic history and outlook. Only then will the reader make the first step towards the knowledge of Islam, as a cultural and historical event with great cultural, historical, and political prospects in the XXI century.

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The available translations of the Koran into European languages range from literal (and incoherent) transcriptions to elaborate (and often imaginative) adaptations. The first Latin translation of the Koran was made by Robertus Retenensis in the XIIth century and was re-published in Basel centuries later. A French translation by Andre de Ryer appeared in 1647. These early translations were, naturally, anti-Islamic in spirit because they were designed to protect the (Christian) youth of their times from Muslim influence. A German version appeared in Hamburg in 1694 and a new Latin one in Padua in 1698.

An English version, reprinted several times since its first edition in 1734, was authored by George Sale. One can gather some idea of the value of these translations by Thomas Carlyle's comment: "It is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook, a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite. Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran" (AJA Vol.I, 12).

The XIXth century saw the much improved versions of Gustav Fluegel in Leipzig (1841), J.M. Rodwell's (1861), and Edward Henry Palmer's (1880) in England.

Translations in Urdu and a few Turkic languages of Central Asia and the Caucasus have been known for centuries. By now, the Koran can be read in most of the languages of the world.

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I. The Foundation of Islamic Belief

Sura 1 The Opening Sura. ***The first chapter of the Koran, appropriately enough named "The Opening," (al-fatiha), resembles the Christian Lord's Prayer and contains the same number of petitions. An integral part of worship, al-fatiha is recited at all religious functions and public events. It is customary to end its recitation with amin (amen), although this word is rarely heard in other contexts of Muslim devotions. S.2 is called by a host of other names, two of which are "The Often Repeated Seven" and "The Essence of the Scripture."***

1. The Opening

Meccan, 7 verses

1* In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!
2* Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds,
3* the Compassionate, the Merciful,
4* the Sovereign of Judgment Day.
5. You alone do we worship,
You alone do we beg for assistance!
6* Lead us on the straight path,
7. the path of those for whom You have mercy,
but not of those who have incurred Your wrath and gone astray.

Notes:

A chapter of the Koran is called a **sura**, meaning row or sequence. Arabic words are highlighted the first time they are used. Verses explained in the Notes are marked by an asterisk.

V. 1: In this translation, God is not called ***Allah***. Calling God ***Allah*** in an English text might falsely suggest that the God of Islam is different from the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The God of Islam is the One and Same God of Jews and Christians; He is Abraham's God (***el***), omnipotent, omnipresent, demanding, forgiving, jealous, generous, as is the God of the Koran. **Al-lah** is derived from ***el***, whose plural Hebrew form ***elohim*** is used in the Bible. Its definite article **al** underscores His uniqueness. For a Muslim, Allah is the Creator God, the God of Adam and the Prophets. His most exalted attribute is His infinite mercy for mankind.

The words of vs.1, **bismillah ar-rahman ar-rahim,** have a special meaning in Muslim religion and culture. They are prefixed to all contracts, letters and writings. Pupils write them at the top of each page of their notebooks. In the Koran they precede each sura, except the ninth, and they sanctify all human actions. **Ar-Rahman** and **ar-Rahim** are two of God's names, derived from **rahma** (mercy). The former may denote the source of mercy on earth, and the latter the source of mercy in the spiritual realm.

The ***Names*** of God are capitalized, in contrast to His ***attributes***, for example, The ***M***erciful; He is ***m***erciful.

Discrepancies among the translators of the Koran start at the very first verse of the first sura. Here are a few examples of earlier renderings, with the initials of the translators as they appear in the Bibliography:

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate (RB).
In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful (AJA,NJD,TC).
In the name of Allah, most benevolent, ever-merciful (AA).
In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful (MMP, SK).
In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful (AYA).

Vv. 1-3: In public prayers, Islam favors celebrating God's mercy over asking for personal favors. Indeed, God knows our needs even before we tell Him about them.

V. 2: "The Worlds" (**al-'alamin**) has the meaning of "the Universe" or "all beings"; it has the same root **'lm** as knowledge (**'ilm**). "Worlds" in plural suggests the complexity of the universe and the existence of the supernatural realm of the Unseen. Some Muslim mystics believe that the Worlds comprise at least three realms: the material world, the world of the Angels, and the world of God.

Personified by Gabriel, the world of the Angels allows man to communicate with God without actually meeting Him or seeing Him.

V. 4: Islam proclaims its belief in the Judgment Day, the Day when people will appear before God to answer for their deeds.

V. 6: The Koran teaches that God leads the righteous to the straight path. He leads and guides them as their Helper, Defender, and Sustainer. Deprived of God's mercy, the sinners go astray and lose their way in disbelief.

Here is the text of the Christian Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) for a direct comparison with S.1:

(1) Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
(2) Thy kingdom come.
(3) Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
(4) Give us this day our daily bread.
(5) And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
(6) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
(7) For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

SURA 112 THE UNITY. ***S.112, addressed by God to His Prophet and through him to all Muslims, establishes that Islam is based on the unity of God. The word "say" is used in the Koran some 300 times in order to usher in the words addressed by God to the Prophet Muhammad. This four-verse sura, also called al-ikhlas (Unity in faith), summarizes the whole Koran.***

112. THE UNITY
Meccan, 4 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Say: "God is One,
2* God is steadfast.
3* He didn't give birth nor was He begotten,
4. and no one is equal to Him."

V. 1: The Koran is God's Word transmitted to the Prophet by Gabriel, **Djibril**, the Archangel of the Christians, often called in the Koran "The Spirit." As a Messenger of God, the Prophet is responsible for passing God's Words along to the people.

The Koran is not a narrative, but rather a compendium of exhortations. Unlike the Torah, the Koran does not suggest that the spiritual reality depends on historical order and chronology.

When introduced by "Say," God's words are addressed to the Prophet himself, though he is called by name only five times; otherwise they are addressed to the people at large. The "Say passages" need not be connected to any definite time or place. The frequent occurrence of "say" **(qul)** and "said" **(qala)** is so typical of the Koran that their occasional replacement by "replied" or "exclaimed" could compromise the tonality of the translation.

V. 2: The Arabic word **as-samad** (steadfast) suggests completeness and perfection, divine permanence and eternity. All the attributes of God are one in His Oneness, something man cannot comprehend. The Koran is full of comparisons and metaphors that describe abstract ideas. Explanations are given in the notes whenever they seem necessary, but educated Muslims are conscious of the allegorical character of metaphors and see no purpose in dwelling on what defies explanation.

V. 3: Contractions such as "didn't" or "I'll" are used in all direct speech and in all the "Say passages" spoken by the Prophet.

V. 4: There are two opposite doctrines concerning the unity of God: 1) God is unique, absolute, and free of anything, except His Oneness, and 2) God is all-inclusive and thus encompassing all that is in this World and in the Unseen.

SURA 114 THE PEOPLE. *A prayer for God's protection against evil thoughts.*

114. THE PEOPLE
Meccan, 6 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Say:
"I seek refuge by the Lord of the people,
2. the Ruler of the people,
3. the God of the people,
4* from the evil of the hiding Whisperer
5* who whispers into the hearts of the people,
6* the Jinn and the people!"

V. 1: The words to be spoken by the Prophet Muhammad or the words spoken by anyone else are in quotation marks. The words of God are not in put in quotation marks, as the whole Koran is God's Word, but are occasionally preceded by a dash for clarity's sake.

V. 4: The Whisperer is Satan, the Tempter.

V. 5: In the Koran, the site of both understanding and feeling is "the chest" or "the heart." Some translators prefer "breast." In English, "heart" seems to be more appropriate. The substitution of Arabic words that seem strange or out of place by better sounding or "more logical" English words is acceptable only when such a substitution is essential for preserving the meaning.

V. 6: "The Jinn and the people." Like all revealed religions, Islam believes in the existence of immaterial beings: the Angels — the benevolent spirits who assist God and fulfill His orders and the genies (Jinn; singular, Jinni), some benevolent, others mischievous (Cf. S.72).

In the Koran, like in the Bible, God speaks, sees, and hears. Such attributes are to be understood metaphorically: they are not meant to create an anthropomorphic image of the Supreme Being.

Islam forbids to make any kind of images of God and Muhammad, and at first it was forbidden to represent both people and animals — only arabesques and sacred calligraphy were allowed for decoration. Concordances between different suras, and between the Koran and other Scriptures are limited to a minimum. Also omitted are references to scholarly works on the Koran: such references would only confuse the reader. The translators listed in this work are referred to by their initials (See ***Bibliography***, p. xvii).

SURA 113 THE DAWN. ***This sura resembles S.114 in construction and intent. It is used both as a prayer and as an inscription on amulets for protection against the evil eye and the satanic forces.***

113. THE DAWN

Meccan, 5 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Say:
"I seek refuge by the Lord of the dawn
2* from the evil of what He has created,
3. from the evil of spreading darkness,
4* from the evil of those who blow on knots,
5. from the evil of the envious one when he envies."

V. 1: In the Koran, "Lord" is always preceded by a possessive pronoun "my Lord, your Lord," etc., unless it is followed by a possessive case as in "the Lord of the Worlds." It precludes the possibility of attributing the title of Lord to anyone other than God.

The name of the sura, ***The Dawn***, suggests spiritual awakening.

God is "the Lord of the dawn" because He is the real Light that brings enlightenment to man.

V. 2: God uses evil and Satan to fulfill His Design. As it is said in Isaiah 45:7: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

The Koran frequently says that God has elevated man above all His creatures, including the Angels, whom, to make them acknowledge the supremacy of man, He ordered to bow to Adam. Only one Angel (or Jinni) refused to do it, the one called **Iblis**. He became the chief Tempter, the enemy of mankind, and the leader of the forces of evil — the **Shaitan**s (Satans) or the Devils. Satan/Iblis seduces people by making evil and sin attractive to their eyes and souls, but only when God allows it.

V. 4: The people of Arabia practiced a kind of witchcraft that consisted in tying knots along a rope while cursing and blowing on them. Another pre-Islamic superstition was the worship of idols and the attribution of "Angelic daughters" to the Supreme Being.

SURA 109 THE DISBELIEVERS. ***S.109 is an eloquent condemnation of polytheism. Emphasis is attained by the haunting repetition of the same words.***

109. THE DISBELIEVERS

Meccan, 6 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Say:
"O you, disbelievers!
2* I don't worship what you worship.
3. You won't worship what I worship,
4. and I won't worship what you worshiped.
5. You won't worship what I worship!
6* You have your faith, and I have my faith."

V. 1: The vocative "O" is ubiquitous in Arabic.

The Arabic term for those who reject Islam is **kafirun,** to be conveyed as "disbelievers" rather than "atheists" or "unbelievers" because the kafirun, be they pagans, Zoroastrians, Christians or Jews, while denying the Prophet's mission, still can have religious beliefs.

Muslims considered that both Christians and pagans were not monotheists but ***Associators***. Indeed, idolaters worshiped heathen goddesses as God's "divine daughters" (Cf. S.53) and the Christians believed that God had a divine son in the person of Jesus Christ.

The elevated style of this sura is typical of the Koran. This style reinforces direct speech, exhortations and narratives. Like all the Koran, S.109 consists of simple words made solemn by its rhythm and interjections.

V. 2f: In the Koran, events of the future may be referred to in the present or even in the past tense. In some cases, this may be required by the rhyme. But one can also reason as follows: the past has already passed and the present becomes past as soon as it occurs. Therefore, the past and the present have a common function: to help understand the future.

V. 6: Islam stands on five pillars: belief in God and the Judgment Day, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, and paying the prescribed alms (**zakat** or **zakawa**).

SURA 107 RELIGION. ***S.107 can be called "Religion" or "Judgment" because its Arabic name "din" doubles for both. Belief in Judgment Day is an essential requirement of Islam. Divine justice requires that the righteous be recompensed and the evil people punished. Hence, the need for Paradise and Hell.***

The Muslim ethics is now expanded to include the duties of prayer and charity. Such religious concepts as prayer, almsgiving, Hell, Heaven, and Day of Judgment belong to Christianity, Judaism, and many other creeds as well. However, they may acquire a different meaning in the Koran because of the particular connotations of the Arabic words, if not for theological and ethical reasons.

107. RELIGION
Meccan, 7 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Have you observed the man
who denies religion,
2. who drives the orphan away,
3. who urges not to feed the poor?
4. Woe to worshipers
5. who pray carelessly,
6. just to show off,
7* and abstain from almsgiving.

V. 1: The Muslim religion is based on devotion to God, to His Message, to His Prophet, and to the community. Devotion to the community consists in giving alms, protecting the weak and the destitute, honoring one's equals, and respecting one's parents and superiors. Islam cannot be called Muhammadism or Muslimism, as there is no cult of the Prophet and all Muslims worship one God.

V. 7: "Abstain from almsgiving" or "refuse to help [others]".

Belief in God is tightly bound to charity. By giving alms man purifies his soul. Compassion to the indigent cleanses the soul from greed and egoism, and elevates it to the Truth, i.e., to God. The ethics of the Koran is based on the idea that the highest value in life besides faith is what we do for others. Man cannot be good if he leads a self-centered life, no matter how strong is his faith and how virtuous is his behavior.

SURA 103 THE LATE AFTERNOON. ***S.103 starts with a rhetorical oath or adjuration, a feature common to many early suras. The apparent purpose of the oath is not only to establish the veracity of the statements that follow, but also to create a tone, an ambience, a mode of feeling and thinking for the whole sura. Some of these emotional invocations create a mystical atmosphere by conjuring surrealistic associations. For example, a horse race may remind one of the flight of time and the approach of Judgment Day. The short oath at the beginning of this sura bespeaks of the end of an afternoon that suggests the running out of time before Resurrection Day.***

According to tradition, the Prophet recited S.103 shortly before his death.

103. *THE LATE AFTERNOON*
Meccan, 3 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the late afternoon!
2* Verily, men will suffer a loss!
3* But not those who believed, did good works,
urged to the Truth, and called to forbearance.

V. 1: The word '**asr** (the late afternoon) refers not only to the end of the day, but also to time without beginning or end, or to the "never resting time," as in Shakespeare's Fifth Sonnet.

V. 2: The Arabic text is rich in expletives such as **inna** that can be rendered by "verily," "indeed," "in truth," "surely," "in fact," etc. These words bring emotions into the text; in addition, "verily" conveys to it a sacramental character.

The Koran is read aloud with frequent stops that are not indicated by punctuation. In this text, long verses are broken into different themes or ideas by means of skipped lines that divide the text into paragraphs, thus helping to understand complex suras. For example, in this sura the oath is made into a separate epigraph.

In order to preserve at least a few Arabisms and unusual associations of ideas, some rules of standard English, especially, those of punctuation, are relaxed or modified.

V. 3: The phrase "But not those who believed..." is the mark of late texts; it is probably an addition to an early short sura.

SURA 93 THE MORNING LIGHT. ***S.93 contains words of comfort to the Prophet, an orphan who went through a period of poverty and persecution.***

93. *THE MORNING LIGHT*
Meccan, 11 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the morning light
2. and the night when it is still!
3* Your Lord has not forsaken you
and He does not disdain you!
4* Verily, the later [life]
shall be better for you than the first one.
5. Soon your Lord will provide you
with what will make you happy.

6* Did He not shelter you
when He found you orphaned?
7. Did He not offer you guidance
when He found you wandering?
8* Did He not enrich you
when He found you in need?
9. So, do not oppress the orphan
10* or drive the beggar away,
11. but proclaim the mercy of your Lord!

V. 1: Light and darkness are often mentioned in the Koran. The morning light is the nascent and developing spiritual life, and the night is the quiet preparation for its further growth.

V. 3: At the beginning of his mission the Prophet Muhammad stopped receiving the divine Revelation for about six months.

V. 4: This verse must remind the believer that each moment of his life is better than the preceding one.

V. 6: The Prophet lost his father, '**Abdullah**, at the age of two and was raised first by his grandfather, '**Abdul-Muttaleb**, and then by his uncle, **Abu-Taleb**. Protecting the orphans and feeding the poor are two sacred duties of a devoted Muslim.

V. 8: The Prophet and his first wife **Khadidja**, his companion of many years, were endowed with spiritual gifts and mutual love.

SURA 94 REASSURANCE. ***The Koranic suras cannot be classified rigidly: some are short, with just a few verses, like S.94; others are long, like S.2; some are highly emotional and exhortative, others tell stories or offer advice; but they are all unique in their diversity and unpredictable constructions. S.94 appeals by its pleasing rhythmic verses. It deals with the poor reception accorded to the Prophet by his own folks. The preaching of the Prophet was the butt of jokes and the target of attacks on the part of the rich hedonistic Meccans. They could not stand in their midst a man who extolled a new way of life and condemned the lucrative business of the cult of idols.***

S.94 is wholly addressed to the Prophet. Some translators call it "The Opening," but then it could be confused with S.1. Here, it is called "Reassurance," according to its content.

94. R E A S S U R A N C E
Meccan, 8 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Have We not opened your heart
2* and eased your burden
3. that was straining your back?
4. Have We not exalted your fame?

5* Verily, after tension [comes] ease,
6. verily, after tension [comes] ease.
7* Work hard in your free time
8. and strive to your Lord!

V. 1: The heart shrinks under the influence of sin, pain, and grief. To open or widen one's heart is to cleanse the soul from evil and sin, and to fill it with Knowledge and happiness.

V. 2: The burden of the Prophet is his responsibility for preaching monotheism.

V. 5: Relief follows strenuous efforts at accomplishing a task. The Koran teaches that deliberateness is from God and haste is from the Devil.

V. 7: "Work hard in your free time" i.e., after fulfilling your secular obligations, switch to spiritual pursuits: work on self-improvement and preach the Word of God.

SURA 95 THE FIG. ***Islam is inconceivable without the belief in Judgment Day. The further you read the Koran, the more you hear about "that Day." The short "poetical" suras are followed by longer suras dealing with the end of the world and life beyond the grave.***

95. THE FIG
Meccan, 8 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the fig and the olive,
2. and Mount Sinai,
3* and this safe city!
4. We have created man in the best shape.
5. Then We will make him the lowest of the lowest.
6* But not those who believed and did good works —
an unlimited reward is [in store] for them!
7. What makes you deny the Judgment?
8. Is not God the wisest of judges?

V. 1: The objects of the oaths — a common feature of the earliest suras — are night and day, places, animals, plants, celestial bodies, or even entities that defy identification. Later on, the object of the oaths becomes the Koran itself.

To some interpreters, the olive-tree suggests Christianity, Mount Sinai — Judaism, and the fig-tree — Buddhism; thus the Koran is an affirmation of the universal validity of Islam. According to others, the fig-tree represents man: like any other fruit-tree it needs care and protection from pests to produce a perfect fruit.

V. 3: The safe city (or country) is Mecca, a sacred site in Arabia since pre-Islamic times. Wars and acts of violence were prohibited within its boundaries.

V. 6: This is one of the most often repeated statements in the Koran: indeed, salvation is not possible without belief and works of kindness. To do good works is not only to hold onto the five pillars of Islam, but also to deal with relatives and strangers with patience, charity, and respect. A strong family, clan, and society are based on a feeling of communality, togetherness, and solidarity, supported by earnest faith. Pushed to its logical extreme, this ethical imperative abolishes all personal property.

SURA 100 THOSE WHO RACE. ***A dramatic apocalyptic vision, this beautiful sura has been the subject of many mystic interpretations. The Koran has a unique preoccupation with the Day of Judgment and the dreadful fate that will befall the transgressors. In counterpoint, it is rich in pictures of the joyous rewards that are in store for the believers.***

100. THOSE WHO RACE
Meccan, 11 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by those who race at full speed,
2. striking sparks,

3. who attack in the morning,
4. and, raising clouds of dust,
5* irrupt in a body!
6* Verily, man is ungrateful to his Lord!
7. Verily, he himself is a witness to that!
8. Verily, he has a passion for wealth!
9* Does he not know
that when the graves are emptied out
10. and the content of the hearts is exposed,
11. verily, on that Day,
their Lord will know everything about them.

V. 1-5: Those who race are horses that are striking sparks with their horseshoes.

V. 5: Depending on their spiritual development and mystic perception, Muslims perceive in this oath the battle horses that give the most of themselves in the war for the cause of God or the heroic defenders of Islam who fight for their faith with all their might and courage, or the Holy War for spiritual awakening and the supremacy of Islam in the whole world.

Vv. 6-8: The two most serious transgressions for a Muslim are ingratitude to God (synonymous with disbelief) and a passion for wealth. The Prophet himself was frugal and lived with minimal comfort. His example was lost on the Khalifs, Shahs and Emirs of Islam who surrounded themselves with the most refined luxury.

V. 9: The destiny of man does not end with death: man will continue to be responsible for his deeds through the Afterlife.

SURA 102 GREED. ***As already proclaimed in S.100, the passion for wealth is a passport to Hell, and generosity is the supreme purifying virtue.***

102. G R E E D

Meccan, 8 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* You will be distracted by greed
2. until you meet with [your] grave.
3. But soon you shall know!
4. Yes, soon you shall know!
5* If you had real Knowledge,
6. you would surely see Hell.
7. Yes, you would surely see with an unerring eye!
8* Yes, on that Day, you shall surely be asked
about your good times.

V. 1: The reader might be interested in comparing a few renderings of other translators, v.1 being chosen as example:

"The mutual rivalry // For piling up [the good things// Of this world] diverts you // [From the more serious things]" (AYA).

"Abundance diverts you" (MHS).

"The desire of increasing riches occupieth you" (JMR).

"Emulation occupies you" (RB).
"The avarice of plenitude keeps you occupied" (AA).
"Competition has distracted you" (TBI).
"Your hearts are taken up with worldly gain" (NJD).
"Passion for hoarding wealth // Distracts you from the required deeds (VP).

V. 5: In the Koran "Knowledge" (**'ilm**) has the religious meaning of understanding God's way and choosing the right path. If "Truth" (**haqq**) encompasses everything that exists, "Knowledge" is the acceptance of Truth.

V. 8: The Judgment Day is also called the Day, the Last Day, the Resurrection Day, the Awful Day, the Day of Tumult, the Separation Day, or simply the Hour. The believers thought that the Day was due soon and that the Prophet knew its date (cf. S.79:42). Jesus had also been predicting the end of the world for the near future.

SURA 101 THE DISASTER. ***The Day of Judgment will be a Day of calamity, horror, and turmoil. The Koran is very rich in epithets and metaphors that describe the punishment of the wrong-doers.***

101. THE DISASTER

Meccan, 11 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. The Disaster!
2. What is the Disaster?
3* How will you know what the Disaster is?
4. [It is] the Day
when men shall be like scattered moths,
5. and the mountains like carded wool.
6* The one whose balance is heavy
7. shall dwell in happiness.
8. The one whose balance is light,
9. his mother shall be an Abyss.
10. And how will you know what it is? —
11* It is a raging Fire!

V. 3 More accurately "What will explain to you what the Disaster is?" Such rhetorical questions serve to define the terms that were not clear to the Prophet's contemporaries themselves.

V. 6 The balance of the just is heavy with good deeds and that of the sinners is light for the lack of them.

V. 11: Soon the descriptions of Hell and Paradise will be amplified with vivid details. Hell is "the Fire," and Paradise is "the Garden," or "the Gardens under which the rivers flow."

According to Arabic lore, the Fire in Hell has seven layers: 1) Hellfire (**djohannam**) for the rebels and the believers who died without contrition; 2) **laza** — a blazing Fire for the disbelievers; 3) **al-djahim**, the Hell of Gog and Magog; 4) **as-sair** where the issue of Iblis are grinding

their teeth; 5) **saqar** for those who did not pray; 6) **al-khutama** (the smasher) for the Pagan and Christian Associators; and 7) **hawia** — a fiery Abyss for the Hypocrites. **Hawia** is loaded with another suggestive meaning: a mother who lost her first child. The distinction between the seven names for Hellfire is not a matter of principle and may be disregarded in translation.

SURA 99 THE EARTHQUAKE. ***This sura has a beautiful beginning with a powerful visual imagery like anywhere in the Koran where abstract thoughts are supported by striking graphic metaphors. The important questions — what is man and what is his fate are answered simply and succinctly. The similes for the Afterlife are drawn from the life of the nomads of the desert. Water and rest, comfort and quiet were so much on the mind of the desert dweller that he pictured Heaven as a peaceful shady Garden where he will enjoy food and relaxation, and where the faithful will savor friendship untainted by disputes. Hell is a torrid place where the damned will be at one another's throat and ever feel hot and thirsty, nauseated and exhausted.***

99. THE EARTHQUAKE

Meccan, 8 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* When the earth is jolted by an earthquake,
2* when the earth releases her burdens,
3. man shall say: "What's the matter with her?"

4* On that Day she shall announce her news
5. inspired to her by your Lord.

6. On that Day men shall march in groups
to review what they have done.
7* Whoever produced a tiny weight of good shall see it.
8. Whoever produced a tiny weight of evil shall see it.

Vv. 1-5: The verses end in the "feminine" rhyme "aha" (***ha*** is the feminine possessive pronoun) and thus have a special rich sonority that makes this sura resemble S.91.

V. 1: "The earth" is a feminine noun in Arabic.

V. 2: Because in Arabic common names are masculine or feminine, the meaning of some utterances can be extended to metaphors that are not possible in English. Thus "the earth" can conceivably not only "release her burdens" (the ashes of the dead), but also give birth (to plants, for example).

V. 4: The earth symbolizes the world and its order. A New World will come into being on Judgment Day.

V. 7: Some translators call the "tiny weight" an "atom." As **zarra** designates the atom in modern physics, this word may seem inappropriate in a translation of the Koran.

SURA 86 THE SHOOTING STAR. ***S.86 consists of two suras fused together, or of two separate parts, as evidenced by the additional "Oath passage" of vv. 11-12.***

Part I deals with the creation of man in three stages: the initial creation of Adam from mud or clay, the continuous renewed creation of men through fertilization (as in vv. 5-7), and the resurrection seen as a new creation on Judgment Day. According to the Koran, God can create an unlimited number of times; thus, the Jinn and the Angels resulted from separate acts of creation.

Part II contains short statements with abrupt transitions, a common feature in the Koran. It should be noted that sudden changes of theme and pace can add meaning and emotion to a text recited with modulations and inflections. To be on the right path to understanding the Koran, one should put logic aside for a while and let imagination and feeling linger around the suggested images.

Some of verses are so concise that their translation would not be intelligible enough without the words added in square brackets.

86. THE SHOOTING STAR

Meccan, 17 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the sky and by the shooting star!
2. How will you know what a shooting star is?
3. It is a star of piercing light!

4* Verily, every soul has her Protector.

5. Let man consider what he is made of!
6. He is made of emitted water
7* issued between his spine and his ribs.

8. Verily, [God] has the power to resurrect him!
9. But on the Day when the secrets are revealed,
10* he shall have no strength and no assistance.

11* [I swear] by the sky with its cycles
12* and the earth with its awakening
13* that this is the deciding Word
14* and not a joke!

15* They are plotting a plot,
16. and I am plotting a plot!
17. But grant the disbelievers a reprieve,
a light reprieve!

V. 1: The Arabic word **tariq** has been understood as "a night traveler," a "visitor," or "a shooting star." The latter fits the following verses best, but it is not important to know if it is a star or a night visitor, or if the Protector of v. 4 is an Angel or God. Muslims believe that the words of the Koran cannot be the subject of discussion or doubt. When asked about them, they say: "So it is."

In the desolate landscape of the desert, the splendor of the sky is dazzling. No wonder that there is a predilection in the Koran for metaphors about stars and light. Truth is as unfathomable and beautiful as the sky. God is the Guiding Light; His Revelation in the three Scriptures recognized by Islam as God-inspired — the Torah, the Evangel, and the Koran — brings enlightenment to man. The first three verses of this sura should remind man of the light of God's Revelation that shines in spiritual darkness.

V. 4: As the soul is feminine in Arabic, "she" and "her" are more appropriate pronouns for her than the impersonal "it." This verse would support the idea of a "personal God".

V. 7: The spine and the ribs keep the body together just as religion keeps the soul together. The spine conducts nerve energy to the body; the ribs prevent it from collapsing.

V. 10: On Judgment Day God's Guidance shall be withdrawn and each man will have to justify himself on the strength of his own deeds. Nothing can be hidden from God, and neither from men who, in the Hereafter, will see each other's good and bad deeds.

V. 11: The spiritual world is compared again to the sky.

V. 12: The earth is split by springs and sprouting plants.

V. 13: "The deciding Word" is the Law of God that spells the difference between good and evil. Continuing the metaphor of the preceding verse, this Word — the Koran — tears through the material fabric of life. The Koran makes God, the Truth, the Guiding Light visible, and the language of the Koran gives shape to the Universe. The Koran is actual and humanistic to its core. Natural like life, it accurately depicts the whole Universe.

V. 14: Simple and direct words such as "joke" make translators search for mild substitutes such as quip, jest, frivolity, fun, and amusement.

Vv. 15,16: "They are plotting a plot" is a typical Arabic construction. Men are plotting evil and God is plotting goodness. Some Western commentators are taken aback by the idea that God can devise a plot or connive. These words are allegorical, of course, but they are quite natural if we remember that part of God's Design is the fight of virtue against evil in which deception and violence are inevitable.

SURA. 81 THE FOLDED UP. ***Like the preceding sura, S.81 consists of two parts which start with a description of the sky and the celestial bodies. When the physical world comes to an end, it will be dimmed and put out, and the most valuable asset of God's Creation — the spiritual and moral achievement of man — will come to the forefront.***

The reader should interpret the metaphors in accordance with his own imagination, taste, education, and conception of the world, without much concern for the explanations given by others.

Visions such as the one mentioned in v.23 establish the connection of man with the Unseen world. The Muslims believe that man comes in contact with the Unseen in his dreams.

S.81 is rich in thoughts concerning the destiny of man, his toils on earth (vv. 4, 8), and his fate after Judgment Day. Predestination is reminded in v.29.

Further "double suras" are SS. 84, 91, 74, 69 and 56.

81. THE FOLDED UP

Meccan, 29 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. When the sun folds up,
2. when the stars are dimmed,
3. when the mountains are dissolved,
4. when the ten-month [pregnant] she-camels
are left unattended,
5. when the beasts huddle together,
6. when the seas boil over,
7. when the souls are sorted out,
8* when the infant-girl buried alive is asked
9. for what crime she has been slain,
10* when the Scrolls are unrolled,
11. when the sky is uncovered,
12. when Hell is set ablaze,
13. when Paradise approaches,
14* then each soul shall know
what her hands have brought forth.

15* I swear by the receding planets,
16. as they rise and as they set,
17. by the night, as it darkens,
18. by the dawn, as it breathes!

19* Verily, this is the Word of a noble Envoy,
20. who has power and eminence
in the eyes of the Lord of the Throne.
21. He is obeyed and trusted.
22* Your companion is not demented!

23* He has really seen [the Envoy] on the clear horizon,
24* and he is not cagey about the Unseen.
25* These are not the words of Satan, the stoned one!

26. Then where are you going?
27. Verily, this is but a Warning to the Worlds,
28. to those of you who want to be upright.
29* But you can will only what God wills,
the Lord of the Worlds.

V. 8: A reference to the slaying of girls practiced by some Arabian tribes to reduce population. The Prophet was strongly opposed to this custom. As for abortion, Muslims usually do not approve of it because it seemingly interferes with God's Design.

V. 10: These Scrolls contain the record of all men.

V. 14: On Resurrection Day every soul will be judged by her deeds — lit., by "what she has brought forth."

V. 15: The "receding" or retrograde planets are Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn.

V. 19: Gabriel is an ***Envoy*** and the Prophets Abraham, Jesus and Muhammad are ***Messengers.*** Some commentators erroneously attach the attributes of vv. 19-22 to the person of the Prophet Muhammad.

V. 22: A defense of the Prophet Muhammad against his foes.

V. 23: There is more about the Prophet's vision in S.53.

V. 24: The Prophet is not a soothsayer: he speaks openly and does not hide any tricks up his sleeve.

V. 25: "The stoned one" is the literal translation of **ar-ragim**. In the Koran the word "Satan" is used both in the singular and in the plural. Prayers and readings from the Koran are usually preceded by calling to God for protection from the Satan to be stoned (**aghuzu bil-lah min ash-shaitan ar-ragim**).

V. 29: An affirmation of predestination. Theologians of all persuasions have a hard time reconciling man's free will with God's knowledge of the future. Predestination is basically a Christian idea. God had chosen us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). Muslims are sensitive to this issue and recognize the supremacy of God's will in all their actions. In His infinite compassion, God is willing to pardon repenting disbelievers. Just as the seen and the "Unseen" coexist and complement each other, so do God's omniscience and man's freedom of choice.

SURA 82 CLEFT ASUNDER.

This sura can be compared to S.99 for its wealth of images and expression. Like in S.99 the first five verses have a haunting feminine rhyme (rat). "As the scrolls are unrolled," the reader may appreciate the effect of repetitions and subtle changes in tone and details that can be easily missed in translation.

The purpose of S.82 is to call the people to Islam. In exhortative preaching that includes politics and the modern media, repetition is one of the most powerful means of convincing people. If we look for parallels in other religions, we might think of "mantras" in the Eastern cults, and the recitation of litanies in churches.

82. CLEFT ASUNDER

Meccan, 19 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* When the sky is cleft asunder
2. and the stars are dispersed,
3. and the oceans boil over,
4. and the graves are overturned,
5* then each soul shall know
what she has brought forth,
and what she has kept back.

6. O man! What seduces you away
from your generous Lord,
7. Who created you,
formed you, shaped you,
8. and assembled you
according to His Will?

9. But no, you still deny the Judgment Day!

10. Verily, there are Guardians over you,
11. honorable scribes,
12. aware of all your deeds!

13. Verily, for the righteous there shall be bliss,
14. and for the corrupt there shall be the Fire
15. which they shall enter on Judgment Day.
16. They shall not escape from it!

17. But how will you know
what is Judgment Day?
18. And again, how will you know
what is Judgment Day?

19* — It is the Day when no soul
shall help another soul!
On that Day all power shall be with God!

Vv. 1f: The sura opens with the description of the chaos that will overtake the material world on Judgment Day. Its first five verses summarize S.81:1-14. As already made clear in the notes to the preceding suras, such passages resemble a series of "onion skins," which, when peeled, reveal a vision of Judgment Day, a glimpse of man in spiritual revival, or a revelation of the stormy spiritual life of the universe.

"When the sky is cleft asunder" is an image of the destruction of the barrier between the life of this world and the Afterlife; "the stars are dispersed" is an image of the annihilation of the natural order in the world; "the oceans boil over" — an image of the advent of a unified Knowledge and Truth; and "the graves are up-turned" — an image of the transition from death to Life. Many Arab commentators contend that such images do not lend themselves to translation and that, therefore, attempts at translating them are reprehensible. However, these commentators often paraphrase the sacred verses in colloquial speech, in fact, conveying them from one language to another.

V. 5: Man easily forgets his trespasses, but he shall be reminded of each of them on Judgment Day.

V. 19: Man is doomed when God leaves him alone and his friends and family deprive him of companionship and assistance. Before Judgment Day people should help one another — only on the Last Day man shall carry his burden alone. He can achieve virtue only by a recourse to God and through his own good deeds in the society he belongs to.

C.82 resembles the preceding one, S.81. Both affirm that each soul is responsible for its fate and that we are all individually answerable to God for the life we have lived. In both suras one can easily spot an introduction and a conclusion. As is typical for short suras, the verses are ringing and richly rhymed; their tone is solemn. The sentences are brisk and seem to be clipped — the reader can complete them by using his imagination. Unfortunately, it is impossible to fully restore the harmony and vigor of the Koranic verses in English.

SURA 84 THE SPLIT OPEN. ***The first part of this "double sura" starts with a five verse oath-like injunction with the rhyme "at," followed by an emotional appeal to righteousness. In the second part starting with another Oath, the Prophet Muhammad is ordered by God to warn the enemies of faith of the dire consequences of their rejection of the Koran.***

84. THE SPLIT OPEN

Meccan, 25 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. When the sky is split open,
2. it will obey its Lord as ordained.
3. When the earth is stretched flat,
4. expels its content, and empties itself,
5. it will hear its Lord as ordained.

6. O man!
Strive strenuously to your Lord
and you shall meet Him!

7* Whoever receives his record in his right hand
8. shall have his record readily accepted
9* and shall return to his people fulfilled.

10* But whoever receives his record behind his back,
11. let him call perdition upon himself!
12. His destination is the scorching Fire!
13. Indeed, he enjoyed himself with his kin
14. and did not think of his return [to God].
15. Yet his Lord has ever been watching him!

16. I swear by the [flaming] sunset,
17* and by the night and by what it collects,
18. and by the moon and by what makes it full
19* that you shall be ascending step by step!

20* But what is the matter with them,
why do they disbelieve,
21* why do they not fall prostrate
when the Koran is read to them?

22. Only the disbelievers deny it,
23. and God knows best what they conceal.
24. So announce to them a painful punishment!
25. But not to those who believed and did good works —
for them there is a sure reward!

V. 6: The Koran contains many teaching statements that resemble proverbs. In contrast to the Biblical Proverbs and the sayings of Ecclesiastes, in general, their content is more religious than secular. Comp. "Strive strenuously to your Lord and you shall meet Him!" with

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

V. 7: The believers will receive the record of their deeds in their right hand and the disbelievers in their left hand or behind their back. In addition, the sinners will have their right hand tied behind their head and their left hand tied behind their back. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth will be divided into "the people of the right hand" and "the people of the left hand."

This admonishment brings the future into the present to make the reader or listener realize the imminence and inevitability of the Judgment Day.

V. 9: "His family" includes its righteous members, provided he himself is righteous.

Vv. 10-15: Verses that invite to caution can be called Warning or Guidance passages.

V. 17: The night brings animals and people to their homes.

V. 19: "You shall be ascending step by step," or "from layer to layer" — a reference to the gradual spiritual growth of man.

According to the Koran both the material and the spiritual worlds consist of clearly defined levels or strata. Both the sky and the Heaven were believed to mirror these worlds by being built in the shape of concentric spheres.

V. 20: In general, God addresses the believers in the second person and speaks of the disbelievers in the third person.

V. 21: In this arrangement of suras, the Koran is mentioned by name for the first time. At first, the divine Message was called Revelation, Warning, Reminder, or simply the Word. After several suras had been revealed, they were collected to form the **Koran** (the Recitation). Still later, the Koran was called a Scripture, **kitab**, from the root **ktb** (to write). It is said that the Prophet himself started collecting the suras to publish the Revelation during his lifetime on the model of the Torah and the Gospel.

SURA 106 THE QURAISH. ***In the earlier suras, accusations of disbelief are addressed to the Prophet's opponents, the Meccans. The Prophet belonged to the tribe of Quraish, which ruled over Mecca and its vicinity. However, most of Muhammad's relatives were hostile to Islam till 630 (8 H). In this short sura the Prophet wishes success to his tribesmen.***

106. THE QURAISH
Meccan, 4 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* For the treaties of Quraish!
2. For their treaties
in their summer and winter journeys!
3* Let them worship the Lord of this House,
4. Who fed them, saved them from famine,
and secured them from fear!

V. 1: "For the treaties of Quraish" or "in favor of the commercial dealings of Quraish." The Prophet's tribe, the Quraish, was divided into two clans: the Ommayyad clan (after its founder **Ommayya**) and the Hashemite clan (after its founder, **Hashem**, the Prophet's great-grandfather). The kings of Jordan claim to descend from this particular Hashem.

"Arab" is the generic name of those who speak Arabic, but its meaning in Arabic is "nomad." However, at the time of the Prophet, many Arabs lived in cities like **Mecca** and were involved in trade and in catering for pilgrims visiting holy shrines. Some Arabs settled in the valleys of Yemen and lived by agriculture and the production of frankincense and myrrh, which were in demand in the Middle East. Others lived in the desert near meager waterwheels, raising livestock, especially camels, and maintaining caravan routes through Arabia. Mecca (known also as **Bacca**), with its sanctuaries, including the **Ka'ba**, existed for centuries and was mentioned by Ptolemy in the II century A.D. The **Quraish** was one of the prominent tribes living in the vicinity of Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad was born near Mecca in 570 in a spot that does not attract particular devotions.

V.3: "This House" is the sacred Mosque in Mecca or the Ka'ba itself. "The Lord of this House" is the One God.

SURA 105 THE ELEPHANT. ***This sura has been sent down to comfort the Prophet during hard times (cf. S.93). It is a reference to the failed expedition against Mecca of Abraha, the Ethiopian governor of Yemen, shortly before the Prophet was born. The expedition included elephants. Apparently, Abraha's troops were disfigured and decimated by smallpox. This is alluded to by the metaphors of vv. 3-5.***

105. THE ELEPHANT

Meccan, 5 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Have you not seen
what your Lord did to the owners of the elephant?
2. Did He not foil their plans?
3. Did He not send upon them the flocks of birds
4* which pelted them with lumps of baked clay
5. and made [their faces] look like eaten up fields?

V. 1: "Have you not seen" — in spiritual vision?

Vv. 1f: To explain who were "the owners of the elephant" one needs to delve into the eventful history of the south-east corner of Arabia, the mountainous country of Yemen. In antiquity it was the probable home of the nation of 'Ad, frequently mentioned in the Koran (S.69). Later on, Yemen and adjacent regions were ruled by the apparently Jewish Sabaean nation (Sheba) whose capital was Marid, site of a famous dam (SS. 89,34). According to the Bible, a queen of Sheba paid a visit to Solomon in ca. 950 B.C. (S.34). In A.D. 340, Yemen was converted by the Abyssinians to Christianity. Some 200 years later the Jews re-instated themselves in Yemen and their ruler, Zhun-Nuwas fought the Christians and destroyed their community in Najran (S.85). Under the instigation of Byzantine, Abyssinia reconquered Yemen and returned it to Christianity. In about 560, give or take five years, the governor of Yemen, Abraha, unsuccessfully attacked Mecca (this event is the object of ***this sura***). In 575, Yemen was conquered by the Zoroastrian Persians, and when their governor embraced Islam (628, 6 H), Yemen became Muslim. Since the IX century it practices a special creed (Zaydism).

V. 4: Stones or lumps of baked clay (**sijjil**) are also mentioned as carriers of God's wrath against Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. SS. 11:82, 15:74).

SURA. 91 THE SUN. ***The first part of this two-part sura is an eloquent appeal to the people to save their souls. The second part alludes to Salih, the Prophet of the ancient Arabian tribe of Thamood, who once asked his people to spare a she-camel consecrated to God. After they dismissed his warning, their country was destroyed by a raging storm.***

All the 15 verses of C.91 have one rhyme (aha) like the beginning of S.99 and thus create the impression of wholeness and completeness. Other suras like S.81 and S.82 change their rhymes with each theme, sharpening the esthetic sensation of the listener.

Stories about the predecessors of the Prophet Muhammad will become more and more frequent in the coming Prophetic suras that will remind the reader that history constantly repeats itself.

91. THE SUN

Meccan, 15 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the sun and its radiance
2. and the moon that follows it,
3. and the day that reveals its splendor,
4. and the night that conceals it,
5. and the sky and what raised it up,
6. and the earth and what spread it forth,
7. and the soul and what set her up
8. and enlightened her about corruption and devotion!

9* Successful will be the one who purifies [his soul],
10. at a loss will be the one who corrupts her!

11* In their wrong-doing Thamood rejected [the Messenger].
12* When the most sinful of them came forth,
13* the Messenger of God said to them:
"This she-camel belongs to God. Let her drink!"
14. But they called him a liar and cut her down.

Their Lord wiped them out for their crime
and leveled them [to the ground].
15* He was not intimidated by the outcome!

Vv. 1-8: Harmony in the world is based on contrasting pairs such as the sun and the moon, day and night, evil and virtue.

Vv. 9-10: Proverbs or verses resembling proverbs are common in the Koran. They are remembered better than plain prose and sometimes become integral parts of the language. Many proverbs, like vv. 9-10, are built on a contrast between two ideas: "Successful will be the one who purifies [his soul], but at loss will be the one who corrupts her!" This dictum has the same structure as the Biblical "The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. 3:35).

V. 11: The Arabian tribe of **Thamood** is usually identified with the Nabateans who lived on the territory of present Jordan; their capital city was Petra. The "Thamoodites" are mentioned in the Koran 26 times. Stories of the Arabian Prophets are followed by those of Semitic

Prophets and Jesus (**'Issa**). Neither Buddha and Confucius, nor any other Far Eastern sage is mentioned in the Koran.

The stories of the pre-Islamic Arabian Prophets are important reminders that the Jews did not have the monopoly of God-inspired people, and that pre-Islamic monotheistic cultures have prefigured Islam. The Koran does not specify what was the religion of these cultures; presumably, they were followers of God-fearing people, called the **hanifs**.

Some lovers of trivia become occasionally engrossed in numerology, the study of numerical coincidences to which they attribute occult meanings. Thus, the Koran mentions 28 Prophets, which is both the number of days in a lunar month and the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet. The number of Angels in S.74:30 is 19 and the number of suras in the Koran is 19 x 6 = 114. Ibn Hasan came out with the conclusion that the numbers of suras must be as high as 19 x 7 = 137, the number 7 being "more perfect" than 6 (Ch.G.).

V. 12: He was sent to kill a she-camel consecrated to God.

V. 13: Muhammad is both Messenger (**rasul**) and Prophet (**nabi**). A Messenger transmits God's Revelation. All the Prophets from Adam to Muhammad have carried divine Messages. Thus, Adam was a Prophet: he talked to God and received His instructions, so did Jesus; both did not leave a Scripture. They were also Messengers. If Adam and Noah had not been Prophets and Messengers, the Ancient people would have been deprived of Guidance. The Koran is "the Reminder" of God's Messages transmitted to mankind by a line of Messengers from Adam to Jesus.

V. 15: "He was not intimidated by the outcome." "He" could be God, the Prophet Salih, or the man who killed the she-camel.

The seekers of esoteric meanings attach undue importance to such grammatical ambiguities as this one.

SURA 108 ABUNDANCE. ***The name of this sura, "Abundance," has the mystical sense of Wisdom, Knowledge, and Truth that had been given to the Prophet Muhammad at the beginning of his mission.***

108. A B U N D A N C E

Meccan, 3 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* We have granted you Abundance.
2* So pray to your Lord
and offer a sacrifice.
3* Verily, the one who hates you
shall remain without a tail!

V. 1: The Arabic word for "Abundance" is **Kauthar**, the name of a fountain or river in Paradise. Kauthar is the symbol of the innumerable gifts of God. According to legend, the faithful will cross it after the Last Judgment on their way to Paradise.

V. 2: The "sacrifice" is the offering of a camel as prescribed in the Old Testament (Cf. S.91:13); here it is a symbol of contrition because Islam replaced animal offerings by spiritual exercises: limiting one's desires, fasting, and almsgiving.

The Koran has a high regard for charity, and thus helping the poor is like offering a sacrifice to God. Charity is the absolute requirement for ritual purification and for making effective the faith that opens the gates of Paradise.

In modern Islam the slaughter of animals for food during pilgrimage and religious celebrations is also called a sacrifice.

V. 3: A more transparent translation is: "Your foe shall be without descendants!" The Prophet's two male children died in infancy and his opponents gloated that it was a punishment for his alleged misbehavior. Since Biblical times the lack of male posterity has been a sign of divine discontent.

The indiscriminate literal translation of Arabic metaphors may obscure the text, but their replacement with English equivalents may deprive the Koran of its color. Thus, some Arabic expressions are retained, but usually with an explanation in the Notes. Also, the choice of words in the translation is dictated not only by linguistic demands, but also by the inspiration of the translator.

SURA 111 THE PALM FIBER. ***S.111 is a curse against an enemy of the Prophet, his uncle (nicknamed Abu Lahab). His wife used to spread thorny sticks tied with palm fibers in the path of the Prophet. As in some other suras, the Prophet is pictured as a righteous man who is painfully hurt by the attacks and the slanders of his opponents.***

111. THE PALM FIBER

Meccan, 5 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Let both hands of Abu Lahab perish,
and let him perish himself!
2. Neither his wealth
nor his deeds will benefit him:
3* soon he will be burning
in the flames of the Fire!
4. And for his wife,
the carrier of firewood, —
5. a noose of palm fibers 'round her neck!

V. 1: The hands symbolize man — all he does and all he owns, including his slaves who are usually called "those whom one's hands possess." A common expression in the Koran is "what his hands have brought," meaning his good and bad deeds. Apart from Abu Lahab, the only contemporary of the Prophet mentioned in the Koran by name or nickname is his adopted son **Zeid** (S.33:37).

V. 3: Abu Lahab means "Father of Flame," so that this verse echoes his name and suggests his hellish nature.

Because Abu Lahab died after the emigration of the Muslims to Medina, some commentators think that S.111 belongs to a much later period (2-4 H). However, it is more reasonable to count C.111 and similar suras, in which the Prophet is defended against slander (e.g., SS. 104 and 86) among the earliest, revealed when his rich relatives were ganging up against him.

SURA 104 THE SLANDERER. ***The slanderer of the first verse is probably the same Abu Lahab as in the preceding sura. Like SS. 100 and 92, S.104 condemns the wealthy Meccans for their stinginess.***

104. THE SLANDERER

Meccan, 9 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Woe to the slanderer and backbiter
2. who amasses wealth,
   relies upon it,
3. and thinks that wealth
   will make him immortal!

4* But not at all!
   Surely, He shall be flung
   into the Smasher!

5. How will you know what the Smasher is?
6. [It is] the Fire of God flaring up
7. that rises to the hearts
8. like a vault over them
9. with pillars swooping upwards!

V. 4: "The Smasher" (the 6th circle of Hell) suggests not only the helplessness of the damned, but also the divisiveness caused by slander and cupidity. It symbolizes the breakdown of the human soul under the influence of the passion for hoarding riches. The early suras of the Koran accentuate God's justice and their tone is sharp and stern. In later suras the Koran celebrates God's compassion and leniency, and shows the disbelievers the way to redemption.

S.104 is the last of the harsh warning suras in this series. The emphasis in the next suras is on the righteous people and on their destiny on earth and in the Hereafter.

SURA 92 THE NIGHT. ***S.92 has only one theme: man's obligations and the reward he will earn for fulfilling them. That is uncommon among the longer suras which are usually replete with unrelated stories and appeals. According to vv. 5-10 God leads to happiness those who do good and to misery those who do evil; however He does not determine in advance who will be righteous or evil. God treats people differently depending on the good and evil in their souls, and He forgives the sins of those who repent.***

S. 92 is often recited on joyous occasions.

92. THE NIGHT

Meccan, 21 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. [I swear] by the enshrouding night
2. and by the shining day,
3. and by what has created man and woman!

4. Verily, diverse are your aspirations!
5. To the generous one who fears God
6. and believes in goodness,
7. We will smoothen the path to prosperity.
8. But to the greedy, the self-sufficient one
9. who repudiates goodness,
10. We will smoothen the path to misery.
11. His wealth shall not help him after his fall!

12. Verily, it is upon Us to show the right path!
13* Verily, the End and the Beginning are in Our Hands!

14. I am warning you about the raging Fire
15. in which the most wretched shall fall,
16. the one who denied and turned away.
17. The most devout shall escape it —
18. the one who gave of his riches to purify himself,
19. and not to repay the favors he had received.
20. He only strived toward his Lord, the Exalted.
21. Soon he shall be gratified!

V. 13: "The End and the Beginning," or "the last and the former [life]."

SURA 97 THE NIGHT OF POWER. *S.97 commemorates the descent of the first words of the Koran on one of the last nights of the month of Ramadan.*

97. THE NIGHT OF POWER

Meccan, 5 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Verily, We sent down [the Koran] on the Night of Power!
2* How will you know what the Night of Power is?
3* The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

4* That [Night], by permission of their Lord,
the Angels and the Spirit descend with all the Decrees.
5. And peaceful it stays till sunrise.

V. 1: In the original: "We sent it (or him) down," — it is unclear whether the Koran or the Prophet is meant.

The Arabic name of the sura is "**al-qadr**." **Qdr** is the root of "to be able to," "to establish," "to ponder," "power," "fate," and many other words. Accordingly, different translators call this sura "Power" (SQ, TBI), "the Glory" (FN), "Determination" (AA), "the Majesty" (MHS), etc. However, the word "Night" is the key to its content.

V. 2: One of the nights in 620 when the Koran descended into the soul of the Prophet to be transmitted to the people.

V. 3: S.97 deals with "the Unseen" or "the Unknown" as op-posed to the material world of our senses. The Unseen does not obey our laws of physics and mathematics: a night in the Unseen may last a thousand months, and a day — a thousand years (S.32:5).

The Unseen doubles for the future and the past. The words that refer to the Unseen, such as Angels and Fire, are capitalized.

Man cannot fully apprehend their significance.

V. 4: The Spirit is Gabriel (**Djibril**). The highest Angels are "those nearest to God": Gabriel, Michael (**Miqal**), '**Asrafil**, who will proclaim the Judgment day, and the Angel of death, '**Isra'il**.

The Angels have no intellect, and thus, no free will. There-fore, they are one degree ***lower*** than man. The Angels may eventually vanish to reappear in "a new Creation."

SURA 96 THE CLOT. ***S.96 is especially important because, according to tradition; its first five verses were the first ones revealed to the Prophet (ca. 610). They establish the relationship between man and his Creator and emphasize the importance of prayer.***

96. THE CLOT

Meccan, 19 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* — Recite in the Name of your Lord, the Creator,
2* Who created man from a clot.
3. Recite [how] your Lord, the most Bountiful,
4* Who taught by the pen,
5* taught man what he did not know.

6. But no!
Verily, man has rebelled
7* and pretended he was self-sufficient.
8. But verily, they shall all return to your Lord!

9* Have you seen the one who disturbed
10* the servant [of God] in prayer?
11. Have you seen him on the right path,
12. calling to righteousness?
13* No, you saw him denying and turning away!
14. Does he not know that God sees [everything]?

15. But no!
If he persists,
We will certainly seize him by his forelock,
16* his lying, sinful forelock!
17. Then let him call his companions,
18* and We will call the Heavenly Hosts!

19* So do not follow him,
but prostrate yourself
and come nearer [to God]!

V.1f: "Recite," "proclaim," or even "intone" convey the intended meaning of the Arabic word **iqra'** better than "read" (see S.73:4). These verses are addressed to the Prophet, but without the sacramental "Say." The Prophet's duty was to convey God's Words to the world and not only to one chosen nation.

V. 2: "Clot," by extension, a "clot of blood" or "embryo."

V. 4: Some translators prefer "taught the use of the pen," introducing the idea that God literally taught writing to man.V. 4 may also suggest that a written copy of the Koran was in preparation at a very early stage of the Prophet's public life.

V. 5: God's teaching should be taken in the broad sense of imparting Knowledge and religious awareness (in Arabic "to teach" and "to know" have the same root **'lm**).

V. 7: Arrogant self-sufficiency is the desire to escape God's wardship and to challenge the harmony He gave to life.

Vv. 9f: This passage is probably directed against a fierce opponent of the Prophet, **'Amr Abul-Hikam** (lit. Father of Wisdom), called by derision **Abu-Jahl** (Father of Ignorance).

V. 10: The servant of God in this verse is the Prophet, but he might be man in general.

"Servant of God," lit. a "slave of God" (**'abd**), for Muslims a title they are proud of; ordinary slaves were called "those who are in someone's hands."

Among the most popular Muslim names are **'Abdulla** (the Slave of God) and **'Abdu** (His Slave). The Spirit (Gabriel), the Angels, and the benevolent Jinns are also Slaves or servants of God. In the Christian Orthodox Church the same expression, slaves of God, is used for the faithful who are about to partake of the communion.

Disturbing a man in prayer is a serious moral and civic offense.

V. 13: To reject God or to deceive about Him is the worst sin imaginable (isn't Satan the master of deceit?). The harshest circle of Hell, the seventh, is reserved for the liars and the hypocrites who do not keep their word. The Arabic root **kzb** means not only telling a lie (**kizb**), but also denying the Truth, God, and His Judgment, and being a blasphemer and a militant atheist.

V. 16: Forlocks were consecrated to God and were worn by freemen (S.55:41).

V. 18: The Heavenly Hosts are the Castigating Angels or the Angels of Death who approach a dying man to carry his soul away to his grave, to some waiting place, to Hell or Paradise. As the life of the soul after death is outside of our perception of time and space, the question about the whereabouts of the soul between death and Judgment is purely rhetorical and has no answer.

V. 19: "Prostrate yourself": bend forward from a kneeling position and touch the ground with your forehead. The feeling of humility and obedience toward God's plan is contrasted to the blasphemous self-reliance alluded to in v.7.

SURA 87 THE EXALTED. ***S.87 advises the Prophet to preach the Koran by reciting it clearly, word by word. The continuity of the divine Revelation from the first words of Genesis to the last sura of the Koran is demonstrated by means of Arabian and Biblical stories.***

87. THE EXALTED

Meccan, 19 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Praise the Name of your Lord, the Exalted,
2. Who created and measured,
3. Who distributed and guided,
4. Who raised the pastures
5. and then turned them into rusty stubble!

6* — [O Muhammad!] We will make you recite,
and do not forget anything,
7. except if God wills it otherwise —
indeed, He knows the revealed and the concealed.
8. We will make your way easy for you,
9. and you keep reminding, reminding is useful indeed!

10. The God-fearing will remember,
11. but the most wretched one will turn away,
12. the one who will burn in the greatest Fire
13. where he shall neither die nor live!
14. Successful shall be the one who purified himself,
15. who glorified his Lord's Name and prayed.

16. Yet you prefer the life of this world,
17. even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting!

18. Verily, this is from the first Scriptures,
19. the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses.

Vv. 6-9: The Prophet is told how to recite the Koran.

God can change the Words of the Koran without contradicting the Truth because Truth can be expressed in various ways depending on time and circumstances, and regardless of how man understands it.

SURA 85 THE CONSTELLATIONS. ***Like S.105, S.85 refers to pre-Islamic times; namely the massacre of Christians by the King Nawas of Yemen, a convert to Judaism, who tried to convert the Christians of Najran (ca. 525). S.85 ends with an affirmation of the divine origin of the Koran.***

85. THE CONSTELLATIONS
Meccan, 22 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the sky and its constellations,
2. and the promised Day,
3* and the witness and the witnessed!

4* Death to the owners of the pit
5. and of the kindled fire!
6. Behold, they sat around it
7. and watched the believers being ill-treated
8. in retaliation for their belief in God,

the Almighty, the Praise-worthy,
9. the Owner of Heavens and earth.
God is Witness to all things!

10* Verily, those who persecute believing men and women,
and do not repent, shall be punished by Hell,
they shall be punished by the Fire!
11* But those who believed and did good works
shall dwell in the Gardens
under which the rivers flow.
And this will be a great success!

12. Verily, unlimited is the power of your Lord!
13* Indeed, He is the One,
Who begins and restores [life].
14* He is the All-Forgiving and the Loving,
15* He is the Sovereign of the Glorious Throne,
16. the Executor of His Will!

17. Have you heard of the hosts
18* of Pharaoh and Thamood?
19. But no! The disbelievers are still denying,
20. though God encircles them from behind.

21. Yes, this is the Glorious Koran
22* preserved on a Tablet.

V. 1: Because of homonymy, the "constellations" (**al-buruj**) could also be "towers" or signs of the Zodiac.

V. 3: The witness might be God, the Prophet, the Angels, the Records of deeds in Heaven, and even the stars mentioned in the first verse. Those witnessed might be either the sinners or those who died for their faith.

Vv. 4: "Pit" or "trench." The compassion shown here to the Christians is worth noting.

V. 10: The sinners will be punished in this life by the Fire of hate, shame, and remorse.

Vv. 10-11: It seems that while the Koran was being collated, some verses have been added and others separated from their con-text. Some changes in verse length, rhythm and rhyme might have been introduced during the editorial process.

V. 11: The metaphor about the rivers of Paradise may refer to the river of life in Heaven (Comp. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life" in Rev. 22:1). Paradise is frequently called "Gardens" or "Garden."

V. 14: God's Names such as the Merciful, the Almighty, and the Compassionate are all in the superlative degree. There are 100 of them, including the Name **Allah**. In Arabic these Names are preceded by the article **al**; in English they are capitalized.

Many Muslims carry on their persons a rosary of 33 beads of equal size and one larger, oblong bead, called "the minaret." They use the rosary to recite the 99 Names of God in 3 groups; at the minaret they say the Name, Allah. Some authorities think that the 100th name of God is not necessarily Allah; it might be revealed only on Judgment Day.

V. 15: The Throne of God — the site of His power and glory, or the symbol of His eternal Presence.

V. 18: "Pharaoh" brings to mind the Prophet Moses to whom God revealed the Torah. Bringing a new Revelation is the prerogative of a Prophet. Although the Bible does not attribute any scripture to Abraham, the Arabs revere him and his elder son Ishmael (by Agar) as Prophets and ancestors. Thus they consider themselves as a people not less "chosen" than the Hebrews. According to the Bible, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekkah, Jacob and Leah were buried in Palestine in the cave of Machpelah, enclosed nowadays inside a mosque and revered both by the Muslims and the Jews.

V. 22: The original of the Koran is kept in Heaven on a Tablet or in a Book.

SURA 74 THE WRAPPED UP. ***According to tradition, this sura was revealed about six months after S.96. It is composed of two parts. Part I is an address to the Prophet about his mission (the castigation of the disbelievers in vv. 30-31 that ends this Part seems to be a later gloss). Part II (v.32f) is a vivid depiction of scenes from the Last Judgment.***

C. 74 opposes the predestination of man (vv. 31, 38, 56) to his full responsibility for his fate (v.38): the two concepts are not contradictory, but complete each other.

The further we proceed in this rendition of the Koran, the components of a sura increase in number and complexity.

74. THE WRAPPED UP

Meccan, 56 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

* — O you, wrapped up [in a mantle]!
2. Arise and warn!
3. Glorify your Lord,
4. cleanse your garments,
5. shun abomination,
6. and when you give, do not seek a profit.
7. Be patient for your Lord's sake!
8* When the bugle is sounded,
9. that Day will come, the Day of Distress —
10. it will not be easy for the disbelievers.

11* Let Me deal with the one
that I created special!
12. I endowed him with abundant riches
13. and sons standing by his side.
14* I spread for him a smooth [path],
15. yet he is asking Me for more!

16* But no! For opposing Our Signs,
17* I will submit him to an [exhausting] climb!

18. He thought it over and plotted:
19. so let him die for what he has plotted!
20. And once more: let him die for what he has plotted!

21. He looked all around,
22. frowned and scowled.
23. Then he turned his back
and making much of himself,
24. he said:
"That's nothing but magic
passed on from father to son —
25. just the words of a man."

26* — Soon I will burn him in the Saqar!
27. How will you know what the Saqar is?
28. It does not spare anything,
it leaves nothing untouched
29. and it scorches people!

30* Over there they are nineteen.
31* They are Angels.
We have entrusted to them the Fire,
and We have fixed their number
to test the disbelievers.
Let those who received the Scripture be sure of it,
and let those who believed grow in faith.
And let no doubts remain in those
who received the Scripture and believed.

Only the infirm of heart
and the disbelievers are saying:
"What did He mean by this example?"
Thus God leads astray those He wills
and guides aright those He wills!

He is the only One to know
the Hosts of your Lord.
This is just a Reminder to mankind!

32. But no! [I swear] by the moon,
33. and the retreating night,
34. and the dawn shining forth
35. that this is one of the greatest [Signs]!
36. This is a Warning to mankind,
37. to those of you who advance,
and to those of you who fall behind.
38* Every soul is responsible for her deeds.

39. Those of the right hand —
40. the ones in the Gardens,
will be asking one another
41. and the sinners:
42. "What has brought you into the Sakar?
43. They shall say:
"We didn't pray,
44. we didn't feed the poor,

45. we babbled with the babblers,
46. and we denied the Judgment Day,
47. until the Inevitable came upon us!"
48. No intercessor shall intercede for them!

49. But what is the matter with them?
Why are they running away from the Reminder
50. like frightened asses
51. fleeing from a lion?

52* They all want to receive their Scroll unfurled!
53. But no! They did not dread the Hereafter!
54* But no! This is the Reminder!
55. Anyone who cares will remember it,
56. but he shall remember it only if God wills.
He is the Lord of righteousness
and the Lord of forgiveness.

V. 1: While receiving the Revelation, the Prophet Muhammad used to wrap himself in a mantle, the symbol of prophetic mission. For example, it is said in the Bible that Elijah passed his mantle on to Elisha (I Kings 19:19). Usually, the Prophets covered their entire body to seclude themselves and commune with the Unknown in a trance. The title and the first verse of this sura are not much different from the title and the first verse of the next S.73.

V. 8: The advent of the Judgment Day will be announced by the sound of a bugle or a trumpet, by a deafening noise, or by a soul-rendering cry.

V. 11: "Special" is a more suitable word here than "unique" or "alone."

Vv. 11-25: This passage is about man in general and the enemy of the Prophet, Walid ibn Mugaira, in particular.

V. 14: "I spread for him a smooth [path]," lit., "I made his bed smooth."

V. 16: While the New Testament, especially the Gospel according to John, sees miracles in such violations of the laws of nature as miraculous cures, the multiplication of bread and wine, and the awakening of the dead, the Koran sees miracles in the laws of nature themselves. The harmony and beauty of the world is by itself a proof of God's existence.

Many suras describe such wonders of nature as the movement of celestial bodies, the majesty of mountains and seas, the merits of cattle, down to the mystery of the sprouting seed and the conception of a human embryo. These are the "wonders" or Signs that prove the existence of a generous and intelligent Creator. The Koran avoids the word "miracle" (**mu'ji-za**) because the Signs, astounding as they are, usually do not defy the laws of nature and are miraculous in themselves.

In the Koran the same word, **aya** is used both for "Sign" and "verse." Are not the Verses of the Koran miraculous Signs, representing God's inspiration and mercy? The miraculous transformation of Moses's staff into a snake is also a Sign. The Bible uses "Sign" in the same sense as the Koran: "For the Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22).

V. 17: "I will submit him to an [exhausting] climb!" A steep or forbidding side of a mountain is called **'aqaba**. 'Aqaba is also the name of a hill in the vicinity of Mecca upon which a group of Arabs swore allegiance to the Prophet in 620.

We remind the reader that the words between square brackets are not in the Arabic original. Sometimes such additions may look like unwarranted commentaries, but they are needed to clarify the meaning and the shades of the text. Words required by English grammar and syntax, and occasional transition words are introduced without brackets. Stylistic modifications are explained in the text whenever necessary.

V. 26: The Saqar is the fifth circle of Hell.

Vv. 30-31 are later additions. It is said that the number of Angels (19) is equal to the number of positive qualities in a good man. Nineteen is a number that intrigued the mystics searching for hidden messages in mathematics.

V. 31: With regard to predestination, already met with in S.81 and S.92, the Koran adopts the teaching of the Bible: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wickedly shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:10). Predestination is discussed in the New Testament by Mark (Cf. Mark 4:11-12, 25, 33-34). As the community of Mark was persecuted, the belief in predestination was likely to reinforce the self-confidence and solidarity of people in peril.

V. 38: Predestination is a logical consequence of the doctrine of the unlimited Knowledge of God, but the fact that God knows the past, the present, and the future does not limit the responsibility of man for his destiny.

V. 52: The disbelievers dare God to show them the original Koran or the Record of their deeds which are both kept in Heaven.

V. 54: Especially in the earliest suras, the Holy Koran is called "a Reminder" (of the previous Revelations).

SURA 73 THE ENFOLDED. This sura seems to be one of the earliest, either following or preceding S.74. Basically, it is a call for prayer, different from the ritual prescribed in post-Koranic times. Nightly prayers can me made longer or shorter according to circumstances, and the reading of the Koran should never be a chore that interferes with the essential demands of life. Short as it is, S.73 is complex, with an unusually long concluding verse.

73. THE ENFOLDED

Meccan, 20 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* — O you, enfolded [in a mantle]!
2. Stand up [in prayer] at night, but not all night —
3. half of it, or a little less,
4* or more, and recite the Koran in measured recitation.

5. Soon We will send you a mighty Word!
6. Verily, the watches of the night
fortify the feelings and sharpen the words.
7. Truly, you are busy all day!

8. Glorify the Name of your Lord
and with full devotion strive to Him,
9* the Lord of the East and the West!

There is no god but Him,
so take Him as your Protector.

10. Endure their contentions with fortitude,
and leave them with dignity.
11. Let Me deal with the disbelievers who enjoy their life,
and you, bear with them a little longer!

12. Verily, We have chains and Hellfire,
13. and food that chokes, and a painful punishment
14. for the Day when the earth
and the mountains start shaking,
and the mountains collapse to loose hills!

15* We have sent to you a Messenger to witness against you,
as We had sent before a Messenger to Pharaoh.
16. Pharaoh disobeyed the Messenger,
and We grabbed him a mighty grab.
17. If you do not believe,
then how will you save yourselves on the Day
when your children's hair turns white,
18. the sky is rent asunder,
and the promise comes true!
19* Verily, this is a Reminder.
Let anyone who wishes seek a way to his Lord!

20* Verily, your Lord knows
that you stand up [in prayer]
almost two-thirds of the night,
or one half, or one-third of it,
and some of your followers do the same.
God has measured out the night and the day [for prayer].
He knows how difficult it is for you to keep this count,
and He is ready to forgive you!

So recite from the Koran what is easier [for you]!
He knows who of you is sick,
who travels in the land in search of God's bounty,
and who fights in the cause of God.
So recite what is easier [for you],
stand up in prayer, pay the zakat,
and extend to God a generous loan!
All the good deeds you have prepared for your soul,
you shall find with God as a better and greater reward.

So ask for God's forgiveness!
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

V. 1: While the Prophet was receiving the Revelation on the mountain, he was wrapping himself in a mantle not only because of the cold, but also because of his ecstatic fever.

V. 4: "Recite the Koran in measured recitation" suggests that the Koran should be chanted, not merely read (Cf. SS.96,75).

V. 9: "The Lord of the East and the West," i.e., the Lord of the whole Universe.

To this day, "there is no god but God" or "**la ilaha illal-lah**" is the rallying call of the Muslims.

Vv. 15-19 are addressed to the people; the rest of the sura is addressed to the Prophet Muhammad personally.

V. 19: Predestination is not absolute because God is compassionate and inclined to forgive.

V. 20 is a late addition, as attested by its length and by its references to the Koran and to fighting in the cause of God.

SURA 90 THE CITY. ***This sura, like S.92, describes the basic duties of a Muslim in a few sections that are smoothly connected to each other.***

90. THE CITY

Meccan, 20 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* I do not swear by this city —
2. the city in which you are a freeman,
3. and by the progenitor or his issue!

4. We have created man for hard work,
5. but he thinks that no one has power over him.
6. He says:
"I've squandered enormous riches!"
7. Does he think that nobody is watching him?
8. Have We not given him a pair of eyes,
9. a tongue, and two lips?
10* We led him to two high places,
11. but he did not hurry up the steep incline.
12. How will you know what the steep incline is?
13. [It is] freeing a captive
14. or feeding in a day of famine
15. an orphan of your kin
16. or a poor man in need.
17. [It is] to join those who believed
and called to forbearance,
and called to compassion.
18* These are the people of the right hand.

19. And those who rejected Our Signs
are the people of the left hand.
20. They are under a Fiery Vault!

V. 1: The city is Mecca. One should not swear by a city that defiled itself by rejecting Islam.

V. 10: Two high places or "paths" — the steep one of toil and virtue (**'aqaba**), and the easy one of sloth and dissipation.

Vv. 18: On Judgment Day the just will receive the Record of their deeds in their right hand, and the unjust in their left hand, which will be tied behind their back (S.84:7-12).

SURA 79 THE SNATCHING. ***S.79 is the first sura about a Biblical Prophet, namely Moses. It consists of seven parts, each with its own rhyme: 1) an oath; 2) a warning about the Judgment; 3) the story of Moses; 4) a glorification of God; 5) a promise of Hell and Paradise; 6) another warning about the Judgment Day; 7) a description of the Hour of Judgment. The seven parts of the sura are well balanced in length and content, and the sura is tightly knit together.***

79. THE SNATCHING

Meccan, 46 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by those who snatch ruthlessly,
2. who draw out gently,
3. smoothly wafting along,
4. racing one another
5. and distributing the commands.

6* On that Day when everything quakes and shakes
7. without interruption,
8. on that Day the hearts shall tremble
9. and the eyes shall be downcast!

10* [The disbelievers] say:
"Shall we really become like before
11. after our bones have decayed?"
12. And they say:
"If it's so, [our] return will be a setback!"
13. Just one shout,
14. and they shall wake up!

15* Have you heard the story of Moses?
16. Your Lord called him
in the holy valley of Tuwa:
17. — Go to Pharaoh, who transgressed all limits,
18* and say:
"Don't you want to purify yourself?
19. I'll guide you to your Lord to make you fear Him."

20. [Moses] showed him a great Sign,
21. but [Pharaoh] rejected it and disobeyed.
22. Then, turning away, he left.
23. He gathered [his men] and addressed them,
24. saying:
"I am your lord supreme!"
25. God seized him with a punishment
in the present life and the Afterlife.
26. Verily, this is a Warning for those who fear God!

27* What was it harder to create, you or the sky?
[God] has built it.
28. He has raised its vault and gave it its form.
29. He has covered the night with darkness
and drew out the dawn.

30. He has expanded the earth
31. and He drew from it water and pastures.
32. He has reinforced the mountains
33. for your and your cattle's use.

34* And when the great calamity comes,
35. on that Day everyone shall remember
    what he has been striving to!
36* Hell will be seen by all who can see.
37. The one who transgressed all bounds
38. and preferred the present life,
39. verily, Hellfire shall be his destination.
40. But the one who feared to stand before his Lord
    and refrained from passions,
41* verily, Paradise shall be his refuge.

42. They ask you about the Hour:
    "When is it due?"
43. Can you remember it?
44. Its time is with your Lord,
45* and you are only a Warner for those who fear it.
46* On the Day they see it, [they will think]
    they had waited only one evening or the following morning!

Vv. 1-5: This oath about death is a powerful call to attention. Among the possible protagonists are Angels, winds, souls, stars, conquerors, or even their horses (as in S.100). It would make more sense if we chose the Angels: they snatch the souls of the sinners and carry away those of the just. Judging from the variety of existing renditions, oaths prove difficult to translate without the inclusion of unnecessary comments as is apparent in the following examples of v.1:

> Drawing full stretch (RB).
> In the name of those who expel (the souls of the sinners) by force (VP).
> By those who snatch [men's souls] away // at their last gasp (TI).
> I swear by the angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked (MHS).
> By those sent forth with goodness, one after another (MAA).
> By Emissaries in succession sent (FN).

Vv. 6-9: As a sequel to the preceding, the material world shall be utterly destroyed; only the spiritual world will remain.

Vv. 10-14: A reminder about the Resurrection, addressed to the Meccans, who doubted that a human being could be reassembled from his remains.

Vv. 15-26: A short description of Moses's mission that was hinted at in S.73:5-16. The Biblical stories place the Prophet Muhammad in the succession of Prophets from Adam to Jesus.

The Koran is the last appeal to man to submit to the Creator, as there will be no other Prophets after Jesus and Muhammad.

The Koran contains the Wisdom and Knowledge necessary for a man, but no man will ever have access to full Wisdom. No one can grasp the Koran completely, but everyone must believe in it.

V. 18: The greatest punishment for a transgressor is to be abandoned by God to his fate. However, God may give a chance for redemption even to such an obstinate sinner as Pharaoh.

Vv. 27-33: This is a typical "Sign passage" that describes the creation of the world.

Vv. 34-39: A typical passage with Warnings and Reminders (S.84:10-15).

V. 36: On Judgment Day, Hell will be displayed to all mankind and the just will see who has been thrown into it.

V. 41: Lit., "Garden," meaning "Paradise."

V. 45: The Prophet's mission consisted in reciting the Koran, demonstrating God's Signs, and calling to monotheism. The Messenger was instructed to exercise patience, to use only verbal persuasion, and never ask for a fee. It is only at the close of his mission that the Prophet began to demand from his followers the respect and obedience due to a secular leader and a religious guide.

V. 46: "On the day they see it" — "it" is Hell, in accordance with v.36.

SURA 80 HE FROWNED. ***This sura can be divided into five sections: 1) a rebuke to the Prophet for neglecting a poor supplicant and giving all his attention to a wealthy man, even though all men are equal before God; 2) an affirmation of the sacredness of the Revelation; 3) a description of man's reproduction; 4) a Sign passage; 5) a Warning that the Day of Judgment will be ushered by a horrifying noise or a cry rather than by the sounding of trumpets.***

80. HE FROWNED

Meccan, 42 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. [The Prophet] frowned and turned away
2. when a blind man approached him.
3* How could you know —
he might have cleansed himself
4. and remembered,
and Remembrance would have helped him!

5. To the one who flaunted his wealth,
6* you gave your attention,
7. albeit it was not of your concern
if he did or did not cleanse himself.
8. But the one who approached you with hope
9. and trepidation,
10* him you ignored!

11* This is a Reminder
12. for those who care to remember!
13* [It is] in the honored Scrolls,
14. exalted and immaculate,
15. [written] by the hands of Scribes,
16. honorable and rightful.

17. Woe to man for his denial!

18. What has [God] created him from?
19. He has created him from a drop, shaped him,
20. and leveled his path.
21* Then He will make him die, bury him,
22. and revive him when He wills.
23. But alas! Man does not heed His commands!
24* Let man look at what he consumes
25. and at how We pour rain in downpours
26. and split the earth with cracks.
27. We produce on it grain
28. and grapes, and edible plants,
29. and olives and palms,
30. and luxuriant orchards,
31. and fodder and fruit
32. for you and for your cattle to use!

33. When the deafening blast resounds,
34. on that Day, man will flee from his brother,
35. his mother, his father,
36. his wife, and his children.
37. On that Day every one will care only for himself!

38. On that Day [some] faces shall glow
39. with merriment and joy.
40. On that Day the faces of [others]
    shall be covered with dust
41. and enshrouded in darkness.
42. They are those who disbelieved and transgressed!

V. 3: "Cleansing" can be understood in different ways: making the highly ritualized ablutions before praying, becoming pure in spirit, and giving the prescribed alms: the sure way to keep oneself pure is to be generous and compassionate (S.107:7).

V. 10: According to commentators, the Prophet was talking to some important men in Mecca when he was interrupted by the blind man. In expiation, he elevated the blind man to a high position.

V. 11: The Koran is addressed to all the people, regardless of their origin or wealth.

Vv. 13-15: The original of the Koran was written by Angel scribes on Scrolls or Tablets (S.85:21-22).

V. 21: God "will bury him," meaning that He will let him repose during the time between death and resurrection. This time is the barrier mentioned in S.23:100.

The Koran speaks of the restoration of man's body to its original state, as he will appear at the Last Judgment. This return to life should not be confused with the resurrection of a person in a new, exalted state, or "a new creation."

Vv. 24f: The impression might arise that the Prophet addressed himself mainly to pastoral and nomadic tribes, but he also appealed to agricultural communities in the few fertile valleys of Arabia. The Koran asserts that it is God's Revelation (S.56:80; S.26:192) to all nations, to the whole Universe, seen and Unseen.

II. Eschatology and Apocalypse

Sura 77 Those Who Are Sent. ***As in S.79, a hermetic oath artfully sets a mood of anxiety. This oath might refer to winds, human souls, Angels, or verses of the Koran, depending on what plane, the material or the spiritual one, the listener thinks "those who are sent" stand. The dramatic invective against disbelievers is punctuated by a gloomy refrain. Although S.77 is made of messages with brief descriptions of Hell and Paradise, it holds tightly together: it has one topic, one rhythm, one spiritual message.***

77. THOSE WHO ARE SENT

Meccan, 50 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by those
who are sent in succession,
2. blustering in gusts,
3. scattering all over,
4. separating sharply,
5* and carrying the Reminder
6. to justify or to warn!

7. What has been promised to you
shall certainly come to pass
8. when the stars are dimmed,
9. when the sky is cleft,
10. when the mountains are blown away,
11. when the Messengers face a deadline!

12. To which Day shall [it] be deferred?
13* — to the Separation Day!
14. How will you know the Separation Day?
15* Woe on that Day to those who deny!

16* Have We not destroyed the first ones

17. and have We not sent others in their wake?
18. This is how We deal with transgressors!
19* Woe on that Day to those who deny!

20* Have We not created you from a measly drop
21. that We firmly secured in a safe place
22. till the appointed time?
23* We managed like the best of Managers!
24. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

25* Have We not made the earth a repository
26. for the living and the dead?
27. Have We not raised on it lofty mountains?
Have We not given you fresh water to drink?
28. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

29. So, enter [the place] that you have denied,
30* enter the shadow in three columns
31. that will not refresh nor shelter you from flames!
32. They are shooting up sparks [huge] like castles,
33. like tawny camels!
34. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

35* On that Day they shall not speak
36. nor shall they be allowed to justify themselves!
37. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

38. Such will be the Separation Day
when We bring you all together —
you and the first ones.
39. Do you want to plot?
Then try to plot against Me!
40. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

41* The God-fearing shall stay
in the shade by the springs
42. with fruit to their hearts' desire:
43. — Eat and drink to your health
for what you have done!
44. This is how We reward those who did right!
45. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

46. You have little time left
to feast and rejoice —
indeed, ***you*** are the transgressors!
47. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

48. They are told to worship,
but they do not worship.
49. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

50. In what Message will they now believe?

V. 1: It is said that this sura was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad and his closest friends in the cave of Mina.

Vv. 1-6: The winds that are described in these verses carry clouds, bring rain, whisper and howl, transmit noises and voices. Oftentimes they occur unexpectedly, and if they are strong, they may cause destruction. In the spiritual realm winds suggest change and purification; they can perturb or arouse fear. The wind itself is invisible, but its results are perceived by our senses. The wind is the breath of the holy Spirit: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting... And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..." (Acts, 2:2-4).

Vv. 1-6 could also speak of Angels or of God's Messengers.

V. 5: The word "Reminder" **(zikr)** often occurs in the Koran. Man is forgetful and he constantly needs a reminder to follow the precepts of the Koran and to never let the Afterlife get out of his sight. The repetition of the same exhortations aim at maintaining man in a perpetual state of alertness. Once the Reminder has firmly sunk into the inner heart of man, his soul achieves the closest nearness to God.

V. 13: On Judgment Day the wrong-doers shall be separated from the just and evil deeds shall be separated from good deeds, hence the name "Separation Day."

V. 15: Denying the Truth or the Day of Judgment.

V. 16: The first ones — the Ancients, the men of Old, the forefathers.

V. 19: Similar refrains occur in the New Testament, for instance: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48).

V. 20: Man should feel ashamed of his lowly origin.

V. 23: "We managed" — We established conception and birth.

V. 25: "Have We not made the earth a repository..." — an example of a rhetorical question introducing a Sign or a Warning passage about God's power and His goodness to man.

V. 30: The shadow is that of billowing smoke; its branches might represent three major sins: hate, superstition and greed.

Vv. 35-36: In the Koran the sinners are punished individually, as each man is responsible only for himself. In the Bible sin is treated in a totally different way. God often punishes whole nations for the sins of a few people, sparing no women or children, scourging a multitude of innocent souls, enemies, even His chosen people, and absolves of their sins morally unworthy people like David and Solomon. The Koran is silent about the shortcomings of the Prophets out of respect for their mission.

Vv. 41-45: An early description of Paradise. In Paradise, fruit, food, and beverages are allegorical. The Koran promises that all the spiritual needs of man shall be fulfilled in the Hereafter.

SURA 88 THE OVERPOWERING.

Although it consists of disparate sections, S.88 is out-standing for its balanced composition with short, but powerful depictions of the Afterlife, followed by Signs and Warnings. In the next suras the theme of Hell and Paradise is expanded with further details.

88. THE OVERPOWERING

Meccan, 26 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Has the story of the Overpowering reached you?
2* On that Day downcast shall be the faces
3* [of those] who toil to exhaustion
4. and burn in the scorching Fire.
5. They shall be watered at a scalding fountain,
6* and shall have no other food than the bitter dari'
7. which shall neither nourish nor satisfy hunger!

8* On that Day delighted shall be the faces
9. [of those] who rejoice at their deeds.
10* There, in a lofty Garden,
11. they shall hear no idle talk.
12. Therein is a gushing spring
13. and raised couches.
14. Therein are goblets within reach,
15. cushions in rows
16. and carpets spread out.

17* Let them consider the camels —
how they were created,
18* the firmament — how it was raised,
19. the mountains — how they were piled up,
20. and the earth — how it was spread out!

21. So keep warning, for you are their Warner
22. and not their overseer!
23* But to those who turned away and disbelieved,
24. God will deal the greatest punishment.
25. Verily, they shall return to Us!
26* Verily, it is upon Us to call them to account!

V. 1: "The Overpowering" or "the Enveloping" refers to an event or a Day. The Prophet believed that this sura was addressed directly to him, as the "you" is singular. It's obvious, however, that God speaks here to all listeners.

V. 2: Compare "... gloomy shall be some faces" (S.75:24).

V. 3: The inmates of Hell will be dragging heavy chains (S.73:12). Note that according to the Christian belief, sinners will be tormented in the presence of the Lamb (Rev. 14:9-10).

V. 6: **Dari'** — a bitter plant. The images of suffering in Hell are, of course, allegorical. Nobody has the slightest idea what the torments of Hell will be like.

V. 8: Comp. "... some faces shall lighten up" (S.75:22).

V. 10: "A lofty Garden" or "a Garden on the heights."

V. 17: The camel, wonderfully adapted to life in the desert, was the most precious animal for the Arabians, who considered it to be a special gift of God. Domestic animals are very important in pastoral societies and Arabs find in them beauty and grace. They do not allow dogs

in their houses, but they love cats and do not object to their presence in mosques and other sacred areas.

Vv. 18f: The sky, the earth and the mountains are the greatest creations of God.

Vv. 23-24: The Koran says that the strongest punishment is deserved by those who have had a chance to become Muslims, but then "turned around and denied." Rejection of God is equivalent to lying and breaking the first commandment of devotion. The ungrateful and the sinful must fear God's disapproval. Pious Muslims believe that the words "God, have mercy" **(astaghfarul-lah)** must be repeated a hundred times a day.

The mercy of God being unlimited, it could extend to Hell, a part of His Creation. Then the Muslim Hell is more like the Catholic Purgatory than the traditional Christian Hell. "Everything shall disappear, only the Countenance of you Lord will remain" (S.55:26 and S.28:88). Thus, Hell (and Paradise) seem to be for a protracted and not an eternal sejourn as the Christians believe. Their dwellers will exist as long as it pleases God, and when Hell and Paradise vanish, the individuality and self-conscience of people will already have been dissolved.

In Arabic, "God-fearing" is synonymous with "devoted to God," "devout" and "fulfilling his duties."

V. 26: The themes of S.88 are developed and explained in S.52. Apparently these two suras belong to a late period, though they are both listed as Meccan. Repetition of the same themes and verses in the Koran does not make it monotonous and unexciting, as they usually contain subtle changes either in words or in tonality and emphasis. Thus, when the text is read aloud, these variations confer to it a special color and musicality; and the absence of punctuation allows the free flow of rhythm and cadence.

SURA 83 THE CHEATERS. *Detailed descriptions of the Hereafter bring more comparisons between the fate of the believers and the disbelievers.*

83. THE CHEATERS
Meccan, 36 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Woe to those who cheat in weighing,
2. and demand a full measure for themselves,
3. but reduce it when they weigh [for the others].
4. Do they not realize that they shall be revived
5* on the Great Day,
6. the Day when all men shall stand
before the Lord of the Worlds!

7. But no!
The record of the wrong-doers is surely in Sijjin!
8* How will you know what Sijjin is?
9. It is a Book inscribed.
10. Woe on that Day to those who deny,
11. who deny the Judgment Day!
12. Indeed, only a wicked sinner denies it.
13. He says when Our Verses are recited to him:
"These are fables of the Ancients!"

14. But no!
The rust of their deeds clings to their hearts!
15* Surely, on that Day they shall be veiled from their Lord
16. and they shall enter Hellfire,
17. and hear: — This is what you have denied!

18* But no!
The record of the righteous is surely in 'Illiyin!
19. How will you know what 'Illiyin is?
20. It is a Book inscribed,
21* attested by those who are the nearest [to God].
22. Verily, the righteous in rapture
23. shall be looking from [their] couches.
24. You will see in their faces the glow of delight!
25. They shall be given to drink wine sealed
26. with a seal of musk —
let all those who aspire to it! —
27. [wine] mixed with [water] from Tasnim,
28* the source of drink for the nearest [to God].
29. Verily, the sinners mocked the believers,
30. and winked at one another while passing by.
31. And upon returning home, they continued to jest,
32. and to say to their face:
"Surely these are the ones who lost their way!"
33. But they were not sent to be their keepers!
34. On that Day the believers shall laugh at the disbelievers,
35. while looking around from [their] couches.

36* Will not the disbelievers get what they deserve?

V. 1: Trade ethics was of prime importance in a society engaged mainly in commerce. Apparently, cheating in weighing was common enough to elicit this reprimand.

The search for illicit profit is a test or a temptation. God could have made everybody rich and contented, but then it would have been more difficult to discern the righteous from the sinner. Like wealth, poverty is a test from God, and the road to the Afterlife goes through trials on earth. If all mankind renounced faith, there would be no need to test anyone, as all mankind would be on the way to Hell.

V. 5: Comp. with Joel, 2:30-31: "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come."

V. 8: The word **Sijjin** is derived from **sijn** (prison), and **Illiyin** from **'ali** (high). However, there is no need to speculate on the meaning of the words that are explained in the Koran, itself (Cf. vv. 18, 27).

V. 15: "They shall be veiled from their Lord," or "a curtain shall descend between them," (S.7:46) after a preliminary selection based on merits is carried out on Judgment Day.

V. 18: The righteous are also called upright, virtuous, just, faithful, innocent, and blameless.

Vv. 21, 28: "The nearest [to God]" are the Angels and the Spirit Gabriel, who is mentioned by name only in late suras.

V. 36: "Will not the disbelievers get what they deserve?"

Such questions without an answer are rhetoric devices akin to sayings and proverbs. Example: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? (Prov. 6:9).

SURA 75 THE RESURRECTION. ***S.75 consists of several short passages which might have been revealed at different times and then assembled into a sura. The sura starts with a Warning blended with a description of the Last Day, followed by an order to the Prophet to recite the Koran slowly and clearly. Then comes the description of the death and the fate of a sinner, and an affirmation of God's power.***

75. THE RESURRECTION

Meccan, 40 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. I do swear by the Day of Resurrection!
2* I do swear by the soul that has repented!

3* Does man think that We cannot collect his bones
4. and re-assemble him down to [his] finger tips?

5. But no!
Man wants to do evil to the last of his days!
6. He asks:
"When is the Day of Resurrection coming?"
7. — When his sight is blinded,
8. when the moon is dimmed,
9. when the sun and the moon merge into one!
10. On that Day man shall say:
"Where is my refuge?"

11. But no!
He has no safe refuge!
12. On that Day refuge will be only by your Lord.
13* On that Day man will be informed
of what he put forward and what he kept back.
14. Then man shall become his own accuser,
15. even if he tries to vindicate himself.

16* — [O Muhammad!] Do not hasten your tongue
in order to speed up [the Reading]!
17. Verily, it is upon Us to collate and promulgate,
18. and it is upon you to follow what We read.
19. Verily, it is upon Us to explicate it!
20. But no!
You love the fleeting [life]
21. and neglect the Hereafter!

22. On that Day some faces shall lighten up
23. at the sight of their Lord.

24. On that Day gloomy shall be the faces of those
25. who realized that their spines shall be broken.
26* But no!
When [his soul] arises to the collar bone,
27. and a wizard is summoned [to help],
28. then he will realize that parting time has come.
29* With his legs pressed together,
30. on that Day he shall be driven to your Lord!

31* He gave no alms and did not pray,
32. he denied [the Truth] and, turning away,
33. he returned to his family full of himself.
34. Woe and woe to you!
35. And once more: woe and woe to you!

36. Does man imagine that he will be left unattended?
37. Was he not a drop of emitted sperm?
38. Then he became a clot,
and [God] created him and gave him a shape.
39. He made him as a pair, male and female.
40. Then is [God] unable to revive the dead?

V. 2: The Koran speaks of three steps in the growth of the soul (**nafs**), each with its own name: the untamed soul driven to evil (**'ammara**, S.12:53)); the recanting, the self-accusing soul (**lawwama**, S.75:2); and the peaceful, soul (**mutma'inna**, S.89:27).

Vv. 3-4: One of the most persistent objections to the Prophet's doctrine was the raising of the dead from bones and ashes. His audience accused him of reciting old fables and demanded that he perform miracles (Cf. S.79:10-11).

V. 13: "What he put forward and what he kept back" are man's good and bad deeds.

Vv. 16-19: An advice about how to recite the Koran, complementing the instructions of SS.96 and 87: its recitation should be expressive and as clear as possible. In the Catholic and Orthodox liturgy, the chanting of the Gospel is preceded by a measured recitation of the Epistle of the day. Similarly, the Koran becomes fully authentic when it is chanted by expert readers.

V. 26: At agony the soul is believed to raise to the throat or to the collar bone before leaving the body.

V. 29: "With his legs pressed together," or "leg to leg" — in the way a corpse is wrapped in a shroud for burial.

V. 31: "He gave no alms," implies that he lacked faith and was impure — the faithful purify themselves by giving to charity.

SURA 89 THE DAYBREAK. ***This sura is constructed on the model of the preceding one, with a crisp "oath" for introduction, a stern Warning to disbelievers, and a few kind words to the faithful, in conclusion.***

89. THE DAYBREAK

Meccan, 30 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. [I swear] by the daybreak,
2* by the ten nights,
3* by the even and the odd,
4. and by the passing night!
5. Is this not an oath
for those who understand?

6. Have you not seen
how your Lord had treated 'Ad
7* and Iram with its pillars,
8. unmatched in the land?
9. And Thamood who dug into the rocks in the valleys,
10* and Pharaoh, the owner of stakes?
11. They were oppressors in the land,
12. and kept on spreading corruption.
13. Your Lord submitted them to the scourge of punishment —
14. verily, your Lord is watching from the heights!

15* When his Lord tests a man
by giving him honors and favors,
he says:
"My Lord has honored me."
16* But when [God] withholds his sustenance
in order to test him, he says:
"My Lord has humiliated me."

17* But no!
You do not honor the orphan
18. and you do not advocate feeding the poor.
19. You greedily devour [your] inheritance
20. and have a passion for wealth!
21. But no!
When the earth crumbles to dust,
22. and your Lord comes with Angels in ranks,
23* on that Day man shall face Hell.
He will remember on that Day,
but remembrance will not help him!
24* He will say:
"Alas, if only I'd prepared [some good deeds]
for my [future] Life!"
25. On that Day he will be punished
as only [God] can punish.
26. He shall bind him in chains!

27. O you, the peaceful soul,
28. return to your Lord satisfied and pleasing!
29. Enter with My servants,
30* enter My Paradise!

V. 2: This probably refers to the ten days of pilgrimage. When a verse allows two or more interpretations, it is better to convey in translation the most obvious meaning.

V. 3: Each even number follows an odd number and each even number is the sum of two odd numbers. Comparison between opposites is an effective way to deepen understanding.

V. 7: **Iram** (or Ubar) is a quasi-mythological city. In 1992, a fortress and campsites were unearthed in Oman, following surveys taken from the space shuttle Challenger in 1984. Artifacts presumably belonging to Iram date from 2000 B.C., i.e, prior to Greek and Roman times.

V. 10: The stakes could be stelas, obelisks, or wooden posts for raising tents. Apparently, Pharaoh used them to impale or attack his enemies. As in the Bible, Pharaoh is a proper noun.

Vv. 15-16: Such variations on the theme of ingratitude and light-mindedness among men are common in the late suras.

V. 16: "Sustenance" or "subsistence" refer to both the material and the spiritual needs of man.

Vv. 17-18: The basic duties of a Muslim (cf. S.107).

V. 24: The reader is reminded that colloquial contractions and quotation marks distinguish direct speech from God's words and the rest of the text (cf. Note to S.112:3). The words of God to man are occasionally introduced by dashes, for clarity's sake, even though the whole Koran is the direct speech of God.

V. 30: Garden or Paradise? Here, it is definitely Paradise.

SURA 69 THE INEVITABLE.

The first part of this "double sura" starts with a brief description of the fate of the peoples of Thamood, 'Ad, Pharaoh, and Noah, who refused to obey their Messengers. It is followed by a vivid depiction of Hell. In the second part it is affirmed that the Prophet Muhammad is not a magician or a poet and that he has been forbidden to tamper with the Koran under the penalty of death. The sura ends with the proclamation that the Koran is the Truth and that the Creator is to be glorified at all times.

69. THE INEVITABLE

Meccan, 52 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* The Inevitable!
2. What is the Inevitable?
3. How will you know what the Inevitable is?

4. Thamood and 'Ad denied [the Day of] Calamity.
5. For that [sin] Thamood was destroyed by a thunderbolt
6. and 'Ad was crushed by a roaring windstorm.
7. [God] let it rage against them
seven nights and eight days in a row.
You could have seen people
felled like hollow trunks of palm-trees.
8. Can you see now a single survivor?

9. Pharaoh, his predecessors, and the smitten [cities]
have all indulged in sinning.
10. They disobeyed their Lord's Messengers,
and [God] seized them in a mighty grip.

11. When the flood came, We carried you all in the ark.
12. Let it be a Warning to you
and let a hearing ear hear it!

13. When a single blast is blown on the trumpet,
14. when the earth and the mountains move
and are smashed in one stroke,
15. then, on that Day, the Event shall occur!
16. On that Day the sky, turning brittle, shall split.
17. On that Day the Angels [will stand] at its edges,
and eight [of them] will carry God's Throne above them.
18. On that Day you shall be brought to Judgment
and everything you used to hide shall be on display.
9* The one who receives his Book
in his right hand shall say:
"Here it is, read my Book!
20. Indeed, I knew that I'll face my account!"
21. And he shall live in bliss
22. in a lofty Garden,
23. with fruit within reach:
24* — Eat and drink to your health
for what you have prepared in the past days!

25* But the one who receives his Book
in his left hand shall say:
"Oh! I wish I wouldn't receive such a Book
26. and wouldn't know my account!
27. Oh! If only my end came soon!
28. Wealth has not protected me,
29. and all my power has vanished!"

30* — Grab him, bind him,
31. and burn him in Hellfire!
32. Then attach him to a chain seventy cubit long.
33. Indeed, he did not believe in God, the Highest,
34. and did not call for feeding the poor!
35. Today he cannot find any friend in this place,
36. or any food, except filth
37. that only the transgressors eat.

38. By no!
I swear by what you see
39* and by what you do not see!
40. Truly, these are the words of a noble Messenger,
41. and not the words of a poet, so weak is your belief,
42. and not of a soothsayer, so little do you remember!

43. This is a Revelation of the Lord of the Worlds.
44* But if he ascribes a single of his sayings to Us,
45. We will surely seize him by his right hand,
46. We will surely slash his heart's artery,
47. and nobody among you will defend him.

48. Verily, this is a Reminder for those who fear God.
49. Verily, We know that some of you deny [Him].
50. Verily, bitter it shall be for the disbelievers!
51. Verily, [this] is the absolute Truth!

52* So, glorify the Name of your Lord, the Highest.

Vv. 1-3: S.69 starts with the already familiar question that introduces uncommon words. In this instance, we are left to our own guess as to what "The Inevitable" is. Warnings that are cut short produce the impression of suspended threats.

Vv. 19-20 and 25-29: These verses are apparently addressed to the Angels who escort a man to the Last Judgment. About the righteous holding their Book in the right hand, see S.84:7.

Vv. 24, 30-34: These commands are all issued by God.

Vv. 30-37: The duration of punishment is rarely specified in the descriptions of retributions for the sinners. Although the expression "eternal punishment" is occasionally met with in the Koran, the word "eternal" does not carry the meaning of infinite duration that is implied by Christians. The root **khld** of the word **khaled** (eternal) signifies perpetuity, duration, continuity, a long sojourn in some place. Many educated Muslims believe that the world which will come into existence after the Last Judgment will also come to an end. Before that time, the people of the Afterlife will gradually lose their sense of identity; then punishment or reward will become meaningless. Only God will be left as the One Reality, capable of creating anew in a void which might be filled by God's will with a new world with new properties.

V. 39: Heaven is conceived as consisting of seven domes or vaults. The material sky, as a reflection of Heaven, is also seen in the form of seven vaults or spheres.

V. 41: A believing Muslim would not agree that the Koran has any resemblance to poetry. It's blasphemous to imagine that God, the author of the Koran, was involved in composing verses. The Koran is a marvelous happening and does not belong to any genre. It cannot be compared to the Gospel, even though the two Books have the same general purpose. The Koran is full of teaching words and explanations inspired to the Prophet by God. In contrast, the four Gospels describe the life of Jesus and contain only a few of his direct pronouncements as reported by his followers, the majority of whom never saw him face to face.

In 1897, fragments of papyrus reporting "The sayings of our Lord" were found in al-Bahnasa, in Upper Egypt. Fifty years later, more complete manuscripts of early Christian literature were discovered in another location of Upper Egypt, Nag Hammadi. Among them is a collection of 114 sayings ascribed to Jesus, with the title of "The Gospel according to Thomas." These sayings are highly moral and inspiringly Christian, but the Church will always consider them apocryphal because a few of them seem to contradict the canonic Gospel according to John.

Vv. 44f: A stern warning to the Prophet Muhammad.

V. 52: Such a sudden coda concludes several suras.

SURA 70 THE STEPS.

This well-constructed sura is the most complete codex of the Muslim tenets so far. It spells out the duties of man: charity, belief in the Hereafter, prayer, respect for marriage and for covenants, trustworthiness. S.70 paints Hell in somber colors and opposes the ethics of the believers to the laxity of the sinners.

70. THE STEPS

Meccan, 44 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* The inquirer asked about the inevitable punishment
2. for the unbelievers that nobody can avert.
3* It is from God, the Lord of the Steps
4* by which the Angels and the Spirit ascend to Him
in a Day of fifty thousand years.

5. So, endure with gracious endurance!
6. Indeed, they see [the Day of Judgment] far away,
7. but We see it nearby!
8. This is the Day when the sky shall be like melted copper
9. and the mountains like carded wool,
10. Then a friend will not ask about [his] friend,
11. albeit they will be in sight of each other.
The wrong-doer will want to avoid the punishment
of that Day [at the price of] his children,
12. his spouse and his brother,
13. the family that shelters him,
14. and all of mankind, just to save himself.

15. But no!
The raging Fire
16. shall scorch his scalp
17. and shall reclaim those
who turned around and ran away,
18. who hoarded and concealed.

19* Verily, man was created restless!
20. He is fretful when touched by evil
21. and miserly when touched by success.
22. But not those who pray,
23. who are steadfast in their devotions
24. and share their possessions
25. with the asking and the poor.
26. They believe in the Day of Judgment
27. and fear the punishment of their Lord.
28. Verily, their Lord's displeasure deprives them of peace!
29. They reserve their impulses
30. for their wives and their slaves, and are blameless!
31. (And those who covet more are transgressors!)
32. They honor their trusts and obligations,
33. they testify uprightly,
34. and they keep to their prayers.
35. They shall be honored in the Gardens!

36* What is the matter with the disbelievers who rush to you
37. in crowds from right and left?
38. Do they also want to enter the Garden of Bliss?
39. But no! They know what We created them from!

40* But no! I swear by the Lord of the East and the West
that We surely can
41. replace [them] by better [people] with no trouble for Us!
42. So, let them babble and make merry
until they face the promised Day —
43* the Day when they shall dash out of their graves,
hurrying as if they raced to a stone marker.
44. With eyes downcast, they shall be covered with shame —
this is how it shall be on their promised Day!

V. 1: The disbelievers wanted to know the date of the Day of Judgment (S.51:12).

V. 3: "The Steps" (**al-ma'aridj**, from '**aradja** = to ascend) remind one of Jacob's ladder, but they have a deeper meaning: though God sits on High, He gradually becomes more accessible to people with pure hearts. A cognate word is **mi'radj** — the mystical Ascent when the Prophet was transported from Mecca to Jerusalem (S.17). One night Gabriel took Muhammad, while he was asleep at the Ka'ba, to the rock of the Temple of the Mount in Jerusalem on a flying horse. From there he brought him to the "Sidra-tree," the limit of Being before the Absolute. After experiencing the Presence of God, he returned to Mecca as miraculously as he had gone to Jerusalem.

V. 4: As in most of the oath sections, the length of the Day is unreal, since it refers to the Unseen (S.97:3).

V. 19: "Restless," or impatient, timid, fretful, insecure.

Vv. 36-37: Did they rush toward him to receive his Message?

V. 40: "***I*** swear… that ***We***… can": God makes no distinction between the pronouns when He speaks of Himself (S.88: 23-24).

V. 43: "A stone marker" — an altar stone or a goal post.

SURA 78 THE NEWS. ***The News is the announcement of the Resurrection and the Last Judgment. Particularly strong imagery is used to depict Hell and Paradise and to describe the Proofs of God's existence and His compassion to man.***

78. THE NEWS

Meccan, 40 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* What are they asking one another?
2. — About the great News
3. over which they disagree.
4. But soon they shall know!
5. And once more: soon they shall know!

6. Have We not spread the earth
7. and [placed] the mountains as supports,
8. and created you in pairs,
9. and gave you sleep to rest,
10. and made a cover of the night,
11. and gave you daytime to eke out a livelihood?

12. We have built over you seven skies
13* and placed a resplendescent torch.
14. We poured abundant water from the clouds
15. and produced with it grain, vegetables,
16. and luxuriant gardens!

17. Verily, the Separation Day is set —
18. the Day when the trumpet shall resound,
and you shall come forth in crowds.
19. Then the sky shall open its gates,
20. and the mountains shall dissolve like a mirage.

21. Verily, Hellfire is a trap —
22. the destination of the oppressors.
23. They shall remain there for ever,
24. with nothing fresh to eat or to drink,
25* but boiling water and pus.
26. Indeed, they deserved this reward!

27. They did not fear their account
28. when they denied our Signs,
declaring them false!

29. We have preserved everything on record.
30. — So, taste it!
We will not add to you anything,
except some more punishment!

31. Successful shall be those who fear God!
32. For them there will be orchards and vineyards,
33* and buxom maidens of their age,
34. and a full cup!
35. They shall not hear therein any lies or vain talk!
36. Such will be their reward,
such will be the generous gift from your Lord,
37. the Lord of Heavens and earth and what is in between,
the Compassionate, Whom no one dares contradict!

38. On that Day, the Spirit and the Angels will stand in ranks.
Nobody shall speak without permission of the Compassionate,
and then only to tell the truth.
39. That will be the Day of Truth!
Let anyone who wills return to his Lord!

40. Verily, We have warned you
of the impending punishment!
On that Day, everyone shall see
what his hands have prepared,
and the disbeliever will say:
"Woe to me! If only I were dust!"

Vv. 1-5: The "Great Day" is expected "soon," but it will be on the time scale of the Unseen that is different from ours.

V. 13: The "resplendescent torch" is the sun.

V. 25: "Pus" **(ghassaq)** — icy, putrid water, or tears.

V. 33: This allegorical verse indicates that man shall not suffer in Paradise because of loneliness and lack of womanly love.

The **huris** are not mentioned by this name yet, but are called here **kaua'ib** (full-breasted maidens). Each author translates this verse according to his taste:

Companions of Equal Age (AYA).
and high-bosomed maidens for companions (NJD).
And those showing freshness of youth, equals of age (MHS).
And mates, maidens beautiful (MAA).

SURA 52 THE MOUNTAIN. ***The description of the Hereafter is replete with picturesque details. We learn that the believers will be reunited in Paradise with their believing children. The Prophet is encouraged, and the slander that he is no more than a poet is dispelled (vv. 29-49).***

52. THE MOUNTAIN
Meccan, 49 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the mountain
2. and the Scripture recorded
3. on a parchment unrolled,
4. and the House well attended,
5. and the roof raised up high,
6. and the raging sea!

7. Verily, imminent is the punishment of your Lord
8. that nobody can ward off!
9. On that Day when the sky is jolted a [mighty] jolt
10. and the mountains are moved a [mighty] move,
11. woe on that Day to those who denied,
12* and [whose life] was like romping in a pond!
13. On that Day they shall be ruthlessly flung into Hellfire:
14. — This is the Fire you used to deny!
15. Is it magic, or can you not see?
16. Then burn in it! Bear it or bear it not,
you shall get the reward for what you have done!

17* Among the delights in the Gardens, the God-fearing
18. will be relishing the gifts of their Lord.
Indeed, their Lord rescued them
from punishment by the blazing Fire:
19. — Eat and drink to your health for what you have done
20* and recline on thrones standing in rows!
We will join them to the wide-eyed huris.
21. We will reunite them with their believing siblings

whose posterity shares their faith.
We will not deprive them of anything they achieved —
every one will answer for whatever he earned.
22. We will supply them with fruit and meats
to their hearts' desire.
23. They shall be passing cups
without frivolous talk or sinful thoughts.
24. They shall be attended by youths,
as [handsome] as well protected pearls.
25. Approaching one another with questions,
26. they will say:
"We used to worry about our families,
27* but God had mercy upon us.
He saved us from punishment by the scorching wind.
28. Indeed, we had prayed to Him in the past!
Verily, He is the Beneficent, the Merciful."

29. — [O Muhammad!] Let you preach!
By your Lord's mercy you are not a seer or a madman.
30* They say:
"He's a poet! Wait and see how cruel his fate will be!"
31. Tell them:
"Wait, and I'll be waiting with you!"

32. Have they not been carried away by their imagination,
are they not people gone astray?
33. They say:
"He made [the Koran] up!"
Yes, they will never believe!
34. Let them produce a similar recitation
if they are telling the truth!

35. Are they capable of creating
if they themselves have been created from nothing?
36. Are they the creators of Heavens and earth?
No, they are not sure!
37. Do they possess the treasures of your Lord?
Are they the overseers?
38* Do they have a ladder [to Heaven] for eavesdropping there?
Then let those who listen come up with the proofs!
39. Are daughters for God and sons for you?
40. Do you ask them for a fee when they are mired in debt?
41. Or do they possess the Unseen and write [about it]?
42. Or are they plotting deception?
But the disbelievers can deceive only themselves!
43. Or do they have another god besides God?
But God is above anything they associate with Him!

44. Even if a piece of the sky fell upon them,
they would say:
"This is a heap of clouds!"
45. So, leave them alone till they meet with their Day,
till they are stricken down by lightning!

46. On that Day all their plots shall fail
and they shall not receive any help.
47. Verily, there is still another punishment for the sinners,
but most of them do not know [about it].
48. So wait for the judgment of your Lord
and be patient, for you are in His sight!

Praise your Lord when you get up
49. and praise Him part of the night,
and at the setting of the stars!

Vv. 1-6: The spiritual life of man is stimulated by such images as Scriptures revealed on a mountain (Mt. Sinai, Mt. Hira, Mt. of Olives), or holy buildings (the temples of Jerusalem, the Ka'ba), or Heaven depicted as a roof, or the seas, rivers, and springs presented as symbols of life.

V. 12: "Romping in a pond" — "toying with trifles."

V. 17f: Symbolically, fulfillment will be enjoyed in Paradise: resting, eating and drinking (vv. 19-20 and 22), socializing (vv. 20-21 and 23-25), and freedom from worries (v. 26).

V. 20: Like eating and drinking in Paradise, the **huris** must be understood metaphorically; the vagueness of their description, centered upon their eyes, emphasizes their immateriality. Their presence in Heaven is a reminder to man that happiness is complete only when it is shared with another living being (a spouse or a friend, or, here, a huri). The Afterlife will bring the spiritual fulfillment of all of God's gifts, without exception.

V. 27: The scorching desert wind or the **simoon**.

V. 30: The rumor that the Prophet Muhammad was a gifted poet was damaging to the idea of a God-sent Koran.

The Arabs descend from Ishmael, the elder son of Abraham by Hagar, about whom God has said: "And as for Ishmael... I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly... I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 17:20). At the insistence of his wife Sarah, Abraham sent Hagar and her son away into the desert (Gen. 21:14). The first born of Ishmael, named after their towns, were Nebajot and Kedar (Gen. 25:13-16). Now, according to Isaiah (21:13-17), Kedar was located in Arabia and the promised Messenger of whom God says: "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighted, I have put my spirit upon him" (Is. 42:1) was to arise from "the villages that Kedar does inhabit" (Is. 42:11). We also read in Ezekiel (27:21): "Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats." Therefore, the coming of the Prophet, a descendant of Ishmael and Kedar, took place as predicted in the Bible.

V. 38: The steps are for Angels, not for the Jinn (S.70:3-4).

SURA 56 THE EVENT.

The "double" Sura 56 is long and complicated. We learn in it about the Inevitable (death and Judgment, Hell and Heaven) and the accession of virtuous ancestors to Paradise. The apocalyptic depiction of Hell brings to mind the Revelation of St. John.

Part I: 1) an oath (vv. 1-6); 2) a description of Paradise (vv. 7-26); 3) its repeated description (vv. 27-40); 4) a description of Hell (vv. 41-50); 5) a Warning (vv. 51-56); 6) a Sign passage (vv. 57-73); 7) a short Doxology for conclusion (v.74).

Part II: 1) a new oath (vv. 75-76); 2) a definition of the Koran (vv. 77-82); 3) a Warning passage (vv. 83-94); 4) a Doxology that repeats v.74 (vv. 95-96).

56. THE EVENT

Meccan, 96 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. When the Event occurs
2. — and, no doubt, it will occur —
3. it will be humbling [for some]
and exalting [for others].

4. When the earth shakes shakingly,
5* when the mountains crumble to crumbles
6. and become scattered dust,
7* then you will be divided into three groups:
8* those of the right hand —
who are those of the right hand?
9. And those of the left hand —
who are those of the left hand?
10* And the first ones —
[who are] the first ones? —
11. The ones who are nearest [to God]!

12. In the Gardens of Delight
13. there will be a multitude of the first
14. and a few of the latter.
15. On decorated couches
16. they shall recline facing one another.
17. They shall be waited upon by never aging youths
18. with goblets, ewers, and cups with spring water
19. that will cause no headache and no inebriation.
20. They will have the fruit of their choice,
21. and the fowl to their liking;
22. and wide-eyed huris,
23* like well-guarded pearls.
24. They are their reward for what they have done.
25. Nobody shall hear there
any frivolous or sinful words,
26. but only the words: "Peace! Peace!"

27. Those of the right hand? —
What about those of the right hand?
28. They are among thornless lote-trees
29* and trees with flowering clusters
30. in a spreading shade
31. by the running water
32. and with abundant fruit,
33. inexhaustible and never forbidden.
34. They are upon lofty thrones!

35. We have created [the huris in a special] creation.
36. We have made them virgins,
37. loving and of the same age
38. as those of the right hand.

39. There shall be [there] a multitude of the first
40. and a multitude of later [generations].

41. And those of the left hand? —
What about those of the left hand?
42. [They are] in the scorching wind and boiling water,
43. in the shade of black smoke
44. without any refreshment or uplift.

45. Indeed, in the past they lived in dissipation
46. and persisted in heinous sin.
47. They used to say:
"What! We shall be raised after we die
and become dust and bones,
48. and our forefathers too?"
49. Say:
"Verily, the first and the latter
50. shall be surely assembled on the appointed Day!"

51. Then truly, you, the erring, the denying
52* shall eat of the Zakkum-tree,
53. filling your bellies
54. and washing it down with boiling water
55. like camels overcome with thirst.
56. Such will be their reception on Judgment Day!
57. Indeed, ***We*** have created you,
so why do you not believe?
58. Do you not see what you are emitting?
59. Are you those who create, or do We create?
60. We distribute death among you,
so who can prevent Us
61. from changing your likeness and re-creating you
in a form that you cannot even imagine?
62. Indeed, you know about the first [creation],
so why do you not reflect?

63. Do you not see what you are sowing?
64. You make [it] grow, or do ***We*** make [it] grow?
65. If it pleased Us, We could scorch it to chaff.
Then you would wonder:
66. "What! We're in debt,
67. and in deprivation too!"

68. Do you not see the water you drink?
69. Do you pour it from a cloud, or do ***We*** pour [it]?
70. If it pleased Us, We could make it brackish.
Then, why are you so ungrateful?

71. Do you not see the fire you strike?
72. Did you make the tree for the fire,
or did ***We*** make [it]?
73* We made it as a reminder
and as a commodity for the desert dwellers.

74. Exalt, therefore, the Name of your Lord, the Great!

75* Yes! I swear by the setting place of the stars!
76. If you only knew how great is this oath!

77* Verily, this is the Holy Koran
78. in a well-guarded Book.
79. It can be touched only by the purified ones.
80. This is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds!
81. So why do you take this Recitation so lightly,
82. and make a livelihood at disproving [it]?

83. When [the soul of a dying man] raises to his throat,
84. and you are looking,
85. why do you not see Us, though We are closer to him?
86. Why, if you are not accountable [for your deeds],
87* do you not bring [his soul] back
if you are telling the truth?

88. And if he is among the nearest [to God],
89. to him belongs the rest, the fragrance,
and the Garden of Bliss.
90. If he is of the right hand,
91. then Peace upon him
from those of the right hand.
92. But if he is one of those
who denied and went astray,
93. he shall be treated to scalding water
94. and burnt in Hellfire!

95. Verily, this is the absolute Truth!
96. So exalt the Name of your Lord, the Great.

Vv. 5-6: This event is the end of the physical world.

Vv. 7f: All the people since Creation will be treated alike; it is assumed that since the dawn of man the righteous have resisted the seduction of Satan and lived and thought like Muslims.

Of all the Scriptures that deal with both the material and the spiritual world, the Koran is the most apt at describing their coexistence and their areas of contact. A deeply religious person belongs to the two worlds simultaneously.

V. 8: "Of the right hand" are the righteous (S.90:18-19).

V. 10: "The first ones" are the Ancients or the first men who believed in God. Muslims consider that it would be unjust to deny access to Paradise to the forefathers only because they lived before the time of Jesus Christ.

V. 23: The huris are "like well-guarded pearls." (cf. S.52: 24). Their heavenly beauty and purity exclude sexual relations. V. 29: Acacias (**talkh**), or "plantain trees".

V. 52: The **zakkum**-tree appears also in SS. 44, 37, 15.

V. 73: A fire in the desert is a sign of human habitation or a source of spiritual light like Moses's burning bush.

V. 75: The setting of the stars should remind Muslims that material light is not permanent, and that only the divine Light that guides man can never be extinguished.

Vv. 77-80: The original of the Koran is in Heaven; it can be touched only by Angels (S.85:21-22). Apparently, when this sura was revealed, a portion of the Koran was already in a Book form.

V. 87: This verse continues v.83.

V. 91: "You" instead of "him" in the original text.

SURA 44 THE SMOKE. ***The first verse of S.44 consists of the two Arabic letters ha and mim. Twenty-nine suras, most of them from Parts III and IV in this arrangement, start with 1-5 letters usually followed by a tribute to the Koran. These letters could be editors' or copiers' marks; but they may also form separate verses by themselves as integral parts of the Book, possibly with mystical meaning. S.44 consists of 1) an introduction (vv. 1-9); 2) a Warning about the Last Day (vv. 10-16); 3) the story of Moses (vv. 17-37); 4) a new reminder about the Separation Day (vv. 38-42); 5) a description of the Hereafter (vv. 43-57); and 6) a short conclusion (vv. 58-59).***

44. THE SMOKE

Meccan, 59 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2* [I swear] by the persuasive Scripture!

3* We sent it down on a blessed Night —
indeed, We are the Warners!
4. [On that Night] all the wise decisions are sorted out
5. by Our command.
Indeed, We are the Senders
6. by the mercy of your Lord —
He is the Hearer, the Knowing.
7. He is the Lord of the Heavens and earth
and what is in between.
For someone whose faith is strong,
8. there is no god, but Him.
He is the One, Who dispenses life and death,
He is your Lord and your forefathers' Lord.

9. And yet, they still dally in doubt!
10. So watch for the Day when the sky belches a thick smoke
11. that enshrouds the people.
How painful the retribution will be! [They will say:]
12. "Our Lord! Save us from punishment, we do believe!"
13. But then, would the Warning help them?
Indeed, a Messenger came to them with clear explanations,
14. but they turned away from him, saying:
"He's a madman, taught [by some others]!"

15. Even if We postponed the punishment for some time,
you would surely return to sin!

16. But on that Day We will grasp you in a powerful grasp,
and We will retaliate!

17* Long before them We had tested the people of Pharaoh.
An honorable Messenger came to them [and said]:
18. "Return to me the servants of God!
I'm truly your trustworthy Messenger!
19. And don't exalt yourselves before God —
indeed, I came to you with clear authority.
20. I'm taking refuge in my Lord and your Lord
to prevent you from stoning me.
21. If you don't trust me, keep away from me!"
22. Then he turned to his Lord:
"Truly, this is a people of transgressors!"
23. [And he heard]:
— Depart with My Slaves at night:
you will certainly be pursued!
24. And leave the sea parted,
their army is destined to drown!

25. How many gardens and fountains they have left behind,
26. and fields and stately buildings,
27. and riches they had enjoyed!
28. We let others inherit their wealth.
29. Neither Heaven nor earth have shed tears over them,
and they have not received a reprieve!

30* We saved the Sons of Israel from the vile punishment
31. of Pharaoh, an arrogant sinner.
32. We chose them for a mission among the peoples of the Worlds,
33* and gave them Signs for a manifest trial.
34. But they said:
35. "We'll die only once, and we won't be raised!
36. Bring our fathers back if you're telling the truth!"
37* Are they really better than the people of Tubba'
and those who were before them?
We destroyed them all — indeed, they were sinful!

38. We have not created the Heaven and earth
and what is between them on a whim.
39. We have created them in Truth,
but the majority do not know [it].
40. Verily, Separation Day is set for everybody!
41. It is the Day when a friend will not help a friend
and when every one shall be helpless,
42. except those whom God will take into His mercy.
Verily, He is the Mighty, the Merciful.
43. Verily, the Zakkum-tree
44* shall be the food of the wrong-doers.
45. It shall boil in their bellies like molten brass,
46. like boiling water!
47* Seize him, cast him in the midst of the Fire,
48. and pour the punishing scalding water on his head!

49. Taste it if you are so mighty and noble!
50. Verily, this is what you doubted about!

51. Verily, the God-fearing shall have a safe haven
52. amid Gardens and springs.
53. Attired in silk and brocade,
they shall behold one another.
54. We will join them to the wide-eyed huris.
55. They shall enjoy there the fruit they desire.
56. They shall not taste [another] death after the first one!
We will save them from the penalty of the blazing Fire
57. by your Lord's mercy —
this will be a great success!

58* Verily, We made [the Koran] easy on your tongue —
perhaps they will remember!

59. So wait, and let them wait too!

V. 2: "[I swear] by the persuasive Scripture!" or "by the Glorious Koran!" is a common introduction in late Meccan suras.

V. 3: "We sent it down on a blessed Night" (S.97).

V. 17: This is the story of Moses. Since it disregards chronology, the Koran is not a record of events. Repetition makes the stories seem unreal and timeless. Life is being constantly replenished by the events of the past and the past lives in the present as an eternal reality. Man's efforts to recover the "lost time" were in vain. The Koran found it and reinstated it in life.

V. 30: "The Sons of Israel" or "the Children of Israel" is the usual designation of the Jews.

V. 33: Examples of "trials": exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Palestine, the preaching of Prophets culminating with Jesus.

V. 37: **Tubba'** is a locality controlled by the Thamood tribe, or, possibly, a title of the kings of Yemen.

Vv. 44f: Commentators tend to identify with Abu Jahl every wrong-doer mentioned in the Koran (S.96:9-19).

Vv. 47-49 are addressed to the Angels.

V. 58: The natives of Arabia spoke different dialects, but many of them understood Arabic.

SURA 76 MAN. ***S.76 is a rare example of an apocalyptic sura where more space is devoted to the believers in Paradise than to the reprobates in Hell. Its longer verses are typical of the transition from early suras to later ones; the content and the rhythm are still poetical.***

Structure: 1) a Sign passage for introduction (vv. 1-3); 2) events on Judgment Day with emphasis on Paradise (vv. 4-22); 3) an address to the Prophet about the Meccans and an injunction to pray (vv. 23-28); and 4) a Doxology for conclusion (vv. 29-31).

76. MAN

Meccan, 31 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Was there not a long period of time
when man has not been worth mentioning?
2. Yes, We have created man from a drop of mixed seed!
Yes, to test him We gave him hearing and sight!
3* Yes, We guided him — both thankful and disbelieving!
4. Yes, We prepared chains, restraints,
and a Fire for the disbelievers!

5* Verily, the righteous shall be drinking from a cup
a mixture with [the water of] Kafur,
6. the fountain from which the servants of God drink,
thereby speeding its flow.
7. They abide by their vows and dread the Day,
the furor of which will be out of control.
8. For the love of Him they feed the poor,
the orphan, and the captive:
9. "We feed you for God's sake,
and we don't expect from you
any reward or gratitude.
10. Verily, we fear from our Lord
a gloomy and distressful Day!"

11. But God will save them
from the furor of that Day!
He will shower them with light and joy.
12. He will reward them for their patience
with a Garden and silk.
13. They shall be reclining on couches,
protected from the sun and the cold.
14. The shade shall spread over them,
and low over them shall hang clusters [of fruit].
15. 'Round them shall be passed
silver vessels and goblets of crystal,
16. of silver crystal of [the desired] capacity.
17* They shall be offered cups with a mixture with ginger
18. from the fountain called Salsabil.
19. They shall be attended by perpetually young men.
If you saw them,
you would think they were scattered pearls!
20. Look [around], and you will see joy and a great dominion!
21. They wear silk and brocade, and silver bracelets,
and their Lord gives them a pure beverage to drink.
22. Verily, such is the reward for your efforts!

23. — [O Muhammad!] We are sending you the Koran in parts.
24. Wait patiently for the commands of your Lord
and do not follow the sinners and renegades.
25. Celebrate the Name of your Lord mornings and evenings.

26. Prostrate yourself before Him part of the night
or glorify Him throughout the long night.

27. Verily, they love the fleeting [life]
and pay no attention to the grievous Day.
28. We have created them and strengthened their joints,
but had it pleased Us,
We would have replaced [them] by others like them.

29. Verily, this is a Reminder!
Let anyone who wills follow the path of his Lord!
30* But you cannot will what God does not will.
Verily, God is knowing and wise!
31. He admits to His mercy those He wills,
and for the sinners He has prepared a painful punishment.

V. 1: Man was a lower form of life for a long period of time (**dahr**). The extended duration precludes the possibility that the verse speaks of the short-term development of the human embryo.

V. 3: But this happens only as God wills (vv. 30-31).

V. 5: Here **Kafur** (camphor) is the name of a river.

V. 17: **Salsabil, Zanjabil** (ginger, *Zingiber officinale*).

V. 30: As the verses and suras grow longer, rhyme and rhythm are enhanced by such phrases as "God is knowing and wise!" or "You shall see!" Sometimes these additions seem to be of out of context, but they introduce breathing space and color into otherwise a terse and stern text. Like oaths, additions and repetitions create an emotional framework and help hold together dissimilar topics.

SURA 72 THE JINN.

This sura belongs to a later period when the followers of the Prophet were already called Muslims and his enemies — Associators. To understand this sura and the following ones, especially, S.55, it is necessary to explain who are the Jinn. They are spirits from the Unknown, maleficent more often than not, who personify the evil schemes of men and their foolish illusions.

S.72 starts with a story about the Jinn eavesdropping on recitations of the Koran, possibly before it has even been revealed to the Prophet. The conversation of the Jinn about the Koran is interrupted by a glorification of God and "Say" passages which are important components of many suras (SS. 112, 113 and 114 are by themselves exemplars of such passages).

72. THE JINN

Meccan, 28 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* — Say, [O Muhammad!]:
"It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinn
said after hearing [the Koran]:
'Truly we've heard a wonderful Reading
2. that guides to the right way. We believed in it
and we'll never associate anyone with our Lord.

3. Let the Majesty of our Lord be exalted!
He hasn't taken a consort or a child for Himself.
4* A fool among us has been slandering God,
5. yet we thought that a man or a Jinni
would never lie about God.
6. True, some males among mankind
sought the help of males among the Jinn,
but it only increased their folly.
7. They thought like you that God would never revive anyone.

8. When we sneaked to Heaven,
we found it full of mighty guards
and flaming shooting stars.
9. We found there a place to sit and began to listen.
But if someone eavesdrops [again],
he'll be the target of a flaming meteor!
10. We don't know if the ones who are on earth
are destined to perish,
or if their Lord will guide them on the straight path.
11. Some of us are righteous, but others are not,
and we follow separate ways.
12. We know that we cannot prevail upon God on earth,
or frustrate Him by slipping away.
13. But we heard the Guidance and we believed in Him.
And the one who believes in his Lord
isn't afraid of want or injustice.
14* Some of us are Muslims, and others are renegades.
Those who submitted themselves [to God]
have found the right way,
15. and the renegades shall be kindling for Hellfire.'"

16* Had [people] stayed on the right path,
We would have given them rain in abundance
17. to test them thereby.
But those who neglect to remember their Lord,
We will submit them to a severe punishment.

18. The places of worship belong to God,
so don't call there to any one, except God!

19* As soon as the servant of God stands up to pray,
they crowd closely around him.

20. Say:
"I'm calling upon my Lord
and I'm not associating anyone with Him!"
21. Say:
"I don't have the power to harm you
or to improve your conduct."
22. Say:
"No one will save me from God,
and I won't find a refuge anywhere, but in Him,
23* if I don't pass along

what I've received from God and His Messages."

Those who disobey God and His Messenger,
Hellfire is waiting for them —
they will stay in it forever.
24. When at last they see what has been promised to them,
they will know who is weaker in protection
and smaller in number.

25. Say:
"I don't know whether what has been promised to you
is nearby or whether my Lord will postpone it.
26. Indeed, He Alone knows the Unseen
and He will not disclose the Unseen to anyone,
27. except a Messenger of His choice.
He makes some Observers walk behind and in front of him
28. to watch how he transmits the Messages of their Lord.
He knows everything about them,
and He keeps count of all things!"

Vv. 1f: This passage connects to S.46:29-32.

V. 4: The foolish member of the Jinn clan is **Iblis**, the leader of their sinful company. The Jinn of the two sexes represent a separate Creation. Unlike the Angels, they possess an intellect and free will. Like men, they are under the Laws of God and will be judged at the end of the World. The virtuous among them can be Muslims. Although the Jinn are of both genders, there are no indications that they can multiply themselves like people do. Some authors prefer to call them spirits (TC), even though they are the genii or Jinn (doublet words) of Islamic folklore.

V. 14: The word "Muslim" is encountered in this version of the Koran for the first time. Most authors insist on translating this word literally, as "the one who surrendered himself [to God]." The common root of Muslim and Islam (**slm**), has the double meaning of "peace" and "surrender," and so "Muslim" covers the two notions of accepting peace and committing oneself to God.

V. 16: Rain suggests spiritual gifts.

V. 19: "They" — the people who interfered with his prayers.

V. 20: Absolute faith in One God without association of any deities to Him is the cornerstone of Islam. To be righteous, man must believe in One God and His Word, which is His Law, and observe His commandments, which are stated in their most complete form in S.17:22-37. Righteousness built upon the Word of God as His Law is equivalent to high morals: it is incompatible with thievery, disrespect for parents, disdain for other people, adultery and other sins. A righteous person treats the others at least as well as he likes to be treated himself. Only faith in one God and a universal attraction to righteousness can suppress the ethnic hatred that fans wars and injustice in the world.

V. 23: "To obey God and His Messenger," an expression in which God and His Messenger are mentioned together, occurs rarely and only in the late suras.

SURA 55 THE COMPASSIONATE. ***This remarkable sura is quintessentially poetic. By its eerie refrain it combines two of God's Creations: that of mankind made from clay and that of the Jinn made from fire. This combination leads to the musical dominance of the sonorous Arabic dual form. Everything is in twos, and even, as with the Gardens, in two times two. Afterlife is also described twice. The duality of goodness and evil, reward and punishment, past and future, male and female, is universal and causes the perpetual search for perfection that can be found only in unity. No wonder that this poetic and mystic hymn to dualism is very popular among Muslims.***

55. THE COMPASSIONATE

Meccan, 78 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. The Compassionate!
2. He has taught the Koran.

3. He has created man
4. and has taught him intelligent speech.

5. The sun and the moon follow on schedule,
6* grasses and trees are bowing [to Him].

7. He has raised the sky and set up the balance.
8. Do not misuse the balance
9. and do not cheat by weighing short!

10. He has spread the earth for all living creatures.
11. It bears fruit and dates sheathed in clusters,
12. and grain, and grasses, and fragrant herbs.
13* Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

14. He has created man from ringing potter's clay,
15* He has made the Jinn from smokeless fire.
16. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

17* He is the Lord of the two Easts
and the Lord of the two Wests.
18. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

19. He let the two seas meet each other.
20. There is a barrier between them they cannot overflow.
21. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?
22. You get corals and pearls from each of them.
23. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

24. His ships tower above the sea like mountains.
25. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

26. Everything will disappear,
27. only the Face of your Lord will remain,
full of majesty and nobility.
28. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

29* Everything in Heaven and earth entreats Him.
He abides in [His] Glory day after day!
30. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

31* O you, the two burdensome burdens,
We shall deal with you soon!
32. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

33. O you, companies of Jinn and men!
Do you want to trespass the limits of Heaven and earth?
Then let you trespass!
But you will not get there without authority.
34. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

35. Intense Fire and smoke shall be sent upon you,
and defenseless you shall be against them!
36. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

37* When the sky cleaves asunder and reddens like leather,
38. which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

39* On that Day neither men nor Jinn
shall be asked about their sins.
40. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

41. The wrong-doers shall be recognized by their marks
and shall be dragged by their feet and forelocks.
42. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

43. Behold the Hellfire that the transgressors denied!
44* They trudge between it and scalding water.
45. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

46* But for those who fear their Lord's Judgment,
there shall be two Gardens.
47. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?
48. Each with [plants] of different kinds.
49. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

50. Each with two running springs.
51. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

52. Each with two kinds of every fruit.
53. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

54. They shall recline on carpets lined with brocade,
the fruit of both Gardens within easy reach.
55. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

56. Therein shall be the ones with restrained glances,
never touched by a man or a Jinni.
57. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

58. They are like rubies, they are like pearls!
59. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

60* Is not virtue the best reward for virtue?
61. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

62* Besides these there shall be two [other] Gardens.
63. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

64. Each in dark greenery.
65. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

66. Each with two abundant springs.
67. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

68. Each with fruit, dates, and pomegranates.
69. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

70* Each with the virtuous and the beautiful!
71. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

72. These are the huris confined to their tents.
73. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

74. They have never been touched by a man or a Jinni.
75. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?

76. They recline on green cushions and magnificent rugs.
77. Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?
78. Blessed be the Name of your Lord
in His Majesty and Glory!

V. 6: "Grasses" **(Nadjm)** or, by homonymy, "stars."

V. 13: The refrain, "Which of your Lord's favors will you both deny?" addressed to both men and Jinn is weaved into descriptions of the Afterlife. The word "both" is essential to preserve the Arabic dual number. The refrain seems to intrude from some higher plane. Compare: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lords of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever…" (Ps.136:1-3).

V. 15: The Jinn are made from a nobler material than men.

V. 17: The plurals of "East" and "West" make sense because the sun rises and sets at different points on the horizon with two extreme points during the year (S.70:40).

V. 29: In Glory or in Deeds.

V. 31: The "two burdensome burdens" are men and Jinn. Comp.:

We will find leisure to judge you, O ye men and jinn (JMR).

Soon shall We // Settle your affairs, // O both ye worlds! (AYA).

We shall finish off both loads for you (TBI).

Soon We will apply Ourselves to you, O you two armies (MHS).

V. 37: "Reddens like leather" or like overheated fat.

V. 39: It will be too late to ask about their sins.

V. 44: The condemned sinners will be deprived of rest.

V. 46: "Their Lord's Judgment," lit. "their Lord's Standing." One Garden for Muslim men and one for Muslim Jinn; or one for those nearest to God and one for the other righteous.

V. 60: It is significant that the prescription for virtue follows after the mention of the huris in vv. 56-59.

V. 62: These two Gardens are apparently for those nearest to God; then for whom are the other two? The right perception of a religious text requires immersion in its spiritual and mystical content much more than its logical analysis.

V. 70: The righteous will not be deprived of the ability of appreciating loveliness. In later suras, they will be in the company of their wives; indeed, beauty is a feminine attribute. Many verses of the Koran are devoted to beauty: they are beautiful by themselves to hear and to read and they celebrate the splendor of nature. The strongest proofs of the existence of God and His compassion are based on the attraction of man to beauty.

SURA 68 THE PEN. ***Like S.96, this complex sura begins with the mention of the pen. It has six parts: 1) a short oath; 1) words of encouragement to the Prophet (vv. 2-16); 3) a parable about the men who failed to recognize God's will in human affairs (vv. 17-33); 4) an admonition to the disbelievers and a prediction of their fate (vv. 34-45); 5) a second passage of encouragement to the Prophet with a reference to Jonah (vv. 46-50); and 6) a conclusion (vv. 51-52).***

68. THE PEN

Meccan, 52 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Nun. [I swear] by the pen and by what they write!

2. — [O Muhammad!] By the grace of your Lord,
you are not insane!
3. Verily, a sure reward is in store for you,
4. for you have a noble character.
5. Soon you shall see, and they shall see
6. which among you is insane!

7. Verily, your Lord knows best
who has strayed away from His path,
and He knows best who follows the Guidance.

8. So, do not yield to the disbelievers!
9. They want you to yield [first], then they would yield.
10. But do not yield to any despicable swearer,
11. slanderer, peddler of calumny,
12. enemy of the good, foe and transgressor,
13. violent, and impure of birth as well,
14. even if he has money and sons!

15. When Our Verses are recited to him, he says:
"Some fables of the Old!"
16. — Soon We will brand him on the snout!

17. Verily, We will test them,
as We have tested the owners of the orchard
who decided to harvest in the morning,
18* but forgot to acknowledge [God's Will].

19* [An Envoy] of your Lord came in their sleep,
20. and at dawn [their orchard] was bare!
21. In the morning they called to one another:
22. "Hurry up to your orchard if you want to harvest!"
23. They set off, whispering among themselves:
24* "Today we won't let any indigent in!"
25. They started the morning with this resolve,
26. but when they saw everything, they said:
"Truly, we've sinned,
27. and we've suffered a loss!"
28* One of the more reasonable among them said:
"Didn't I tell you to glorify [God]?"
29. They said:
"Glory to our Lord! Indeed, we were wrong!"
30. And they began blaming one another,
31. saying:
"Woe to us, we've really transgressed!
32. Maybe Our Lord would give us another garden
better than this one if we turned to Him!"
33* Such was their retribution,
but their punishment in the Hereafter
shall be still harsher, if they only knew!

34. Verily, the God-fearing shall be with their Lord
in the Gardens of Bliss.
35. Would We treat Muslims and sinners alike?
36. What is the matter with you, how do you judge?
37. Or does your Scripture teach you
38. that you will get anything you choose?
39. Or have We pledged to you
that before Resurrection Day
you will get everything you demand?
40. Ask them, who can vouch for that?

41* Are they not the ones who associate partners [to God]?
Then, let them produce their partners
if they are telling the truth!
42* On the Day when their knees are laid bare
and they are told to bow,
they will not be able [to do it].
43. Overcome with shame, they shall lower their stare:
indeed, they have been called to bow
when they were sound!

44. Then leave to Me those who reject these words.
We will chastise them in stages
from where they do not expect.
45. I will give them a respite,
but, verily, final is My Decision!

46. — [O Muhammad!] Are you asking them for a fee
when they are mired in debt?
47. Or do they own the Unseen so well
that they can write [about it]?

48* So wait patiently for your Lord's Ruling!
And do not be like the companion of the whale
who called to [God] only when in trouble.
49. Had it not been for his Lord's mercy,
he would have been cast, in shame, on a deserted shore.
50. But his Lord chose him and made him righteous.

51. The disbelievers are ready to stare you down
when they hear the Reminder. They say:
"He's really insane!"

52. And this is just a Reminder to the Worlds!

V. 1: "What they write" — presumably, what people write. To avoid a possible anachronism, "pen" could be replaced by "writing reed." However, as "the pen" creates a certain mystical tone, it is not necessary to look for the historical and linguistic "truth" in translation. Literalness may blur the meaning.

V. 18: By forgetting to say "If God wills" (**in sha'-allah**) or "As God wills" (**ma sha'-allah**), the owners of the orchards violated an obligation a Muslim must constantly keep in mind: to acknowledge that nothing ever happens without God's permission.

V. 19f: The owners of the orchards were punished for their self-reliance. Muslims rely on God so fully that they are often blamed by foreigners for being slow and irresolute in making decisions.

V. 24: The owners are guilty of harshness towards the poor.

V. 28: "One of the more reasonable among them," lit., "the average among them."

V. 33: "If they only knew!" i.e., "if they only had spiritual insight!" is one of the exclamations characteristic for the Koran.

V. 41: Sin thrives when "partners" are associated to God: this aberration blurs and distorts the very idea of One sovereign God, and dilutes personal responsibility.

V. 42: A person rendered vulnerable by some disaster is said to have bare knees.

Vv. 48f: "The companion of the whale" is the Biblical Jonas.

"When in trouble" — when he was swallowed by the whale.

SURA 50 [THE LETTER] QAF. ***S.50 is named after the letter "qaf" it starts with. It consists of six main themes: 1) a one-verse oath by the Koran (v.1); 2) warnings that blend into a Sign passage (vv. 2-11); 3) a reference to Biblical and Arab Prophets (vv. 12-14); 4) a description of the death of a man (vv. 17-19); 5) a depiction of the Last Day and a Warning to man (vv. 20-37); and 6) an advice to the Prophet about praying and dealing with his opponents (vv. 38-45).***

Henceforward the reader will be helped to unravel only the most intricate passages. Breaking the text into all its separate items may hinder the assimilation of the sura and compromise the understanding of the Koran as a complex, yet complete entity.

50. [The Letter] Q A F
Meccan, 45 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Qaf.
[I swear] by the glorious Koran!

2. The disbelievers were surprised
when a Warner came to them from their midst.
They said:
"What a strange thing!
3* Is it possible that after we die and turn into dust...
What an unexpected turn!"

4* We know how much of [their bodies]
will be reclaimed by the soil —
indeed, We keep a reliable Record!
5. But they denied the Truth when it came to them,
and now they are in disarray.

6. Do they not see the sky above them:
how We built it,
how We decorated it without any flaws?
7. And the earth: how We spread it out,
how We arranged mountains on it,
how We grew on it a multitude of splendid pairs
8. for everyone who turns [to God] to see and remember.

9. We pour blessed water down from the sky.
With its help We grow gardens and fields,
10. and tall palm trees with rows of fruit clusters
11* to serve as provisions for [Our] servants!
Thus We revive the dead lands,
and such will be the Resurrection!

12* The people of Noah denied before them,
and so did the dwellers of Ar-rass,
[the people of] Thamood,
13. [the people of] 'Ad,
[the people of] Pharaoh, the brethren of Lot,
14. the dwellers of Al-'aika, and the people of Tubba' —
they all rejected the Messengers.
Thus My Warning came true!

15. Why do they doubt the new Creation?
Did the first Creation exhaust Us?
16* Indeed, We have created man,
and We know what his soul whispers to him.
Indeed, We are closer to him than his jugular vein!

17* When the two Receiving [Angels]
will sit to his right and to his left,
18* he will not say a word,
but a keen Observer will be at his side.
19. Truth will be revealed to him at the stupor of death —
this is what you tried to avoid!

20. The trumpet shall be blown
and the Promised Day will arrive!
21* All the souls shall come forth,
each with a Driver and a Witness.
22. You have not expected it,
but We removed your veil,
and sharp is your sight today!

23* His Qarina shall say:
"This is what I have [on him]..."
24* — Cast into Hell every stubborn disbeliever
25. who obstructs virtue,
transgresses the limits, sows doubts,
26* and associates another god with God!
Submit him to a severe punishment!

27. His Qarina shall say:
"O our Lord! It's not I who led him into sin,
he went far astray all by himself!"
28. [God] will say:
— Do not argue before Me. Indeed, I warned you,
29. and My Word is unbending!
I shall never be unjust to [My] servants.
30. But the Day when We say to Hellfire:
— Are you full?, it shall say:
"There is room for some more!"

31. And the God-fearing? Paradise shall approach them
and will not be so far [anymore].
32. This is what had been promised to every one
who turned to [God] and kept [His Word],
33. who feared the Compassionate deep in his soul
and brought [to Him] a devoted heart.
34. Enter in peace — today is the Day of Eternity!
35. They will find therein everything they desire,
and We will give it to them, and even some more!

36. How many generations have We destroyed before them
that were stronger than they,
but wandered in the land without a place to hide!

37* Verily, this is a Reminder
for anyone who has a heart,
who listens and observes.
38* We have created the Heavens and the earth
and what is in between in six days,
and tiredness has not touched Us!

39. — [O Muhammad!] Bear patiently everything they say,
and glorify your Lord with praise
before sunrise and before sunset.
40. Glorify Him part of the night and after the prostrations.
41. Wait for the Day
when the call of the Calling [Angel] is [heard] nearby,
42. for the Day when they hear the Shout —
truly, that shall be the Resurrection Day!

43. Verily, We give life and death,
and to Us is [your] return!
44. On the Day when the earth is split open
by those who rush out [of their graves],
it will be easy for Us to round them up!

45* — [O Muhammad!],
We know best what they are saying,
and you cannot submit them by force.
So remind by the Koran
any one who dreads My Threat!

V. 1: **Qaf** is the name of a letter, not to be confused with a legendary mountain Qaf purported to encircle the world.

V. 3: Koranic ellipses are preserved as suspension signs.

V. 4: The decayed parts of the body are absorbed by the soil, while the bones are well preserved in dry climate.

V. 7: "How We grew on it a multitude of splendid pairs" — apparently a reference to sex in plants.

V. 11: The dead shall come forth from under the ground (v. 44).

V. 12: **Ar-rass** was a community in the realm of the Thamood.

V. 16: The Muslims believe in the close mystic union between God and man. God is ever present in the conscience and soul of His ward. While man is asleep, his spirit is drawn still nearer to his Creator, and as he wakes up, he returns enriched by his dreams. It is natural, therefore, to seek God first within oneself.

V. 17: The two Angels are the ones who carry away the soul of a dead person (S.96:18).

V. 18: The Observer is the Angel or the Demon of the dying person who cannot sin after losing the ability to speak because thoughts cannot be sinful as long as they are not verbalized. Thus animals can never transgress God's Laws.

V. 21: The Driver and the Witness are two Angels. They seem to be the same as the two Receiving Angels of v. 17.

V. 23f: Each person has two companions: a Recording Angel and a personal Demon of the opposite sex (men have a feminine counterpart, a **Qarina**, and women have a masculine counterpart, a **Qarin**). These Demons obviously belong to the progeny of Satan and personify man's attraction to evil. The evildoers and their Qarins/Qarinas will be cast into Hell together. Only the Prophets Muhammad and Jesus have subdued their Qarinas into submission to God.

V. 24: "Cast" is addressed to two Angels; so is the order to "submit" in v.26.

V. 26: Warnings about polytheism are now ubiquitous.

V. 37: "Who observes" or "is a witness" (to the Truth or to the fall of the guilty cities).

V. 38: "And tiredness has not touched Us" — Muslims do not believe that God needed to rest after Creation: indeed, how could the Omnipotent ever feel tired?

V. 45: The duty of the Prophet is not to coerce people, but to persuade them with the help of the Koran.

SURA 53 THE STAR. ***S.53 deserves particular attention. It consists of several sections different in subject, versification, and rhythm. Prominent among these sections are the two visions of the Prophet: Gabriel, descending from Heaven with a portion of the Holy Koran, and the boundary of the Unseen at the Sidrah-tree (vv. 2-18).***

Vv. 19-20 refute the divinity of Al-lat, Al-'uzza and Manat, the three feminine idols which were worshiped as daughters of God.

53. THE STAR

Meccan, 62 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by the star when it sets!

2* Your companion did not lose his way
and did not go astray!
3. He does not speak for himself,
4. but reveals the inspiration that inspired him.

5* He was taught by someone great in power,
6. full of wisdom, who stood upright
7. in the highest horizon.
8. Then he descended and approached
9. within two bow shots or nearer,
10* and inspired to His servant what He inspired.

11. His heart did not deceive him about what he saw!
12. So, why do you argue with him about his vision?
13* He saw [the Spirit] at the second descent
14* by the farthest Sidrah-tree
15* near the Garden of Salvation,
16. by the Sidrah-tree enshrouded in what enshrouded it.
17. His eyes neither strayed nor faltered.
18. Verily, he saw the greatest Sign of his Lord!

19* And you, have you seen
[the goddesses] Al-lat and Al-'Uzza,
20* and the third one, Manat?

21* Is it possible that male [children] are for you,
and the female are for Him?
22. Unfair is such a distinction!
23. These are nothing but names
that you and your fathers gave them.
God did not send any authority down to them.
They follow nothing but guesses
and their souls' desires,
albeit they have received the Guidance of their Lord!

24. Will man ever get all he wants?
25* To God belongs the beginning and the end!

26. Whatever the number of Angels in Heaven,
their intercession would be worthless
if God did not allow it to whom He pleases
and to whom He approves of.

27. Verily, only those who deny the Hereafter
name Angels after females.
28. They have no knowledge about it, they only guess,
but guesses cannot prevail against the Truth!

29. — [O Muhammad!] Withdraw from those
who turn away from Our Reminder,
who crave only the life of this world.
30. Their knowledge stops there!
Verily, God knows best who strayed from His path,
and He knows best who accepted the Guidance.

31. To God belongs everything in Heavens and on earth.
He will reward the wrong-doers according to their deeds
and He will reward with goodness those who do good works.

32. Your Lord is truly generous in forgiving those
who avoid serious sins and abominations
and are guilty only of light offenses.
He knows all about you
since the time He has created you from dirt,
and you were embryos in your mothers' wombs.
So do not justify yourselves,
indeed, He knows best who of you is God-fearing!

33* Have you seen the one who turns away,
34. gives sparingly and lacks benevolence?
35. Does he know the Unseen, can he encompass [it]?

36. Has he not heard from the writings of Moses
37* and Abraham — the faithful [to the law] —

38. that the one who carries a burden
should not carry some one else's burden;
39. that man will get only what he aspires to;
40. that his striving will soon bear fruit,
41. and that then he shall get a full reward;
42. that your Lord is the final destination;
43. that He grants laughter and grief;
44* that He grants death and life;
45. that He has created spouses in pairs, male and female,
46. from a sheltered sperm drop;
47* that upon Him is the Second Creation;
48. that He enriches and satisfies;
49* that He is the Lord of Sirius;
50. that He had destroyed the ancient 'Ad
51. and Thamood without mercy,
52. and earlier, the people of Noah,
the worst sinners and transgressors;
53* that He had destroyed the overturned [cities]
54. which were buried under what buried them.
55* About which of your Lord's favors
will you still contend?

56. [Muhammad] is a Warner
like [all] the Warners of the past.
57* You are being overtaken by the approaching event,
58. but nobody, except God, can disclose its [time].

59. Are you not amazed by this Revelation?
60. You should cry, yet you are laughing
61. and wasting your time!

62. So prostrate yourselves before God and worship Him!

V. 1: "When it sets" or "when it rises."

V. 2: "Your companion" is the Prophet Muhammad.

V. 5: "Someone great in power" is the Angel Gabriel. "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding" (Dan. 9:21-22).

V. 10: "And inspired to His servant what He inspired" is a typical Arabic expression in which, for emphasis, a verb is repeated or followed by its verbal noun (see vv. 16, 54 and 57). Such cognate accusatives are common in Arabic and rare in English.

V. 13: Prophetic missions are accompanied by visions. We are told only how they occurred; their meaning and results are omitted.

V. 14: According to legend, the **Sidrah**-tree is covered with a veil made of/by Angels: a startling eschatological image.

V. 15: "Garden of Salvation" or Garden of Serenity, or Garden of the Presence of God... Sometimes it is not possible to find even a remote equivalent of an Arabic word, especially if it has several different meanings, but it is important to use words that bolster devotion to God.

Vv. 19f: In the mind of the idolaters, Al-lat manifested itself as the full moon, Manat as the new moon, and Al-'uzza as a combination of the two. According to Abu-Ja'far Al-Tabari (X-th century), the Prophet initially tolerated the devotion to the three fertility goddesses, and then forbade their cult.

Vv. 20-28: These verses could have been garbled somewhat by the editors, whose work was made difficult by the plausible existence of several versions of the same texts and the sensitivity of the matter. Logically, one should read these verses in this order:

23. These are nothing but names
that you and your fathers gave them.
God did not send them down any authority.
They follow nothing but guesses and [their] souls' desires,
albeit they have received the Guidance of their Lord!
27. Verily, only those who deny the Hereafter
give to the Angels the names of females.
28. They have no knowledge about it, they only guess,
but guesses cannot prevail against the Truth!
21* Is it possible that male [children] are for you,
and the female are for Him?
22. Unfair is such a distinction!

The length of these verses and vv. 29-32 that follow suggests that they are late insertions or modifications. According to the Koran, God can change His Scripture at will (S.87:6-7).

Vv. 21-22: In a society where the birth of a boy was considered to be the result of God's blessing, the attribution of daughters to God was particularly blasphemous.

V. 25: "The beginning and the end" or "the first [life]" and the Hereafter.

Vv. 33f: A return to the cadence of the first verses.

V. 37: One can surmise that Abraham had received a part of the divine Scripture before Moses.

V. 44: The chronological order of events is irrelevant.

V. 47: The second Creation is the Resurrection of the dead.

V. 49: Sirius, the brightest star, was worshiped by pagans.

V. 53: "The overturned cities" are Sodom and Gomorrah.

V. 55: A slightly modified refrain of S.55.

V. 57: The approaching Event is death or Judgment Day.

SURA 36 [THE LETTERS] YA SEEN. ***Called by the Prophet "the heart of the Koran," this sura is often recited at funerals. It speaks of the fate of the sinners and of their double punishment on earth and in Heaven. Its structure is complicated and tumultuous; appeals to righteousness alternate with warnings. S.36 features a lengthy parable (vv. 13-27) about some allegorical Messengers, probably inspired by the New Testament (the Evangel, as it is called in the Koran).***

36. [The Letters] YA SEEN
Meccan, 83 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Ya seen.
2. [I swear] by the wise Koran!

3. Indeed, you are one of the Messengers
4. on the straight path.

5. This is a Revelation from the Mighty, the Compassionate
6* to make you warn a people
whose fathers have not received a Warning
and remained carefree.
7. The Word [of God] came true against most of them,
but they still do not believe.
8. We have tied chains 'round their necks
up to their chins to force their heads up.
9. We have put a barrier before them
and a barrier behind them,
and We have veiled them
to prevent them from seeing.

10. Warn them or warn them not, they will not believe!
11* You can warn only someone who follows the Reminder
and secretly fears the Compassionate.
So give him the good news
of a pardon and a noble reward!

12. Verily, We shall raise the dead!
We write down in a clear record
what they have brought forth
and the traces they have left behind.
We have recorded everything
in the clear Original [Record]!
13. Give them the example of the dwellers of a town
that had been visited by Messengers.
14. We had sent them two [of them],
but they rejected them both.
Then We sent them a third one in support.
They all said:
"We've been truly sent to you."
15. [The people] said:
"You're men like us.
The Compassionate hasn't sent anything!
You do nothing but lie!"
16. [The Messengers] said:
"Our Lord knows that we've been sent to you.
17. Our only duty is to deliver a clear Message."
18* [The people] said:
"For us you're a bad omen.
If you don't give up, we'll surely stone you

and inflict upon you a grievous punishment!"
19. [The Messengers] said:
"Your omens concern you alone.
Have you not been warned? —
Indeed you're a people transgressing all bounds!"

20. A man came running from the end of the city and said:
"O my people, obey the Messengers!
21* Obey those who don't ask you for a fee
and are guided right!
22. How wouldn't I worship the One,
Who has created me,
and to Whom you shall all return?
23. Why should I take other gods beside Him?
Their intercession wouldn't help me a bit.
They wouldn't save me
if the Compassionate wished to hurt me,
24. and, indeed, I'd be in obvious error.
25. I believe in your Lord, so listen to me!"
26. [He] was told:
— Enter the Garden!
He said:
"Ah! If only my people knew
27. that my Lord forgave me
and made me join the honorable ones!"

28. After that We did not send
Our Heavenly Hosts against his people —
We did not have to send them down!
29. Only one Shout, and they were snuffed out!
30. Woe to [My] slaves!
Indeed, as soon as a Messenger comes to them,
they mock him.
31* Do they not see how many generations
that shall never return
We have destroyed before them?
32. Verily, they shall be all brought before Us!

33* Let a Sign for them be the dead earth
and how We revive it,
how We grow upon it the grain they consume,
34. how We raise upon it gardens
with date-palms and vines,
and make therein springs gush forth,
35. how We let them consume the fruit
that have not been made by their hands.
So why are they so ungrateful?

36. Glory to Him, Who has created in pairs
everything the earth brings forth:
people and much of what they are not aware of.
37* A Sign for them is the night.
When We withdraw from it the day,

they remain in darkness.
38. The sun hastens on its prescribed course,
that the Mighty, the Knowing, has decreed.
39. We measured stations along the path of the moon,
and when it returns,
it looks like a dried palm branch.
40. The sun cannot overtake the moon,
the night cannot overtake the day,
and everything sails on the celestial sphere.

41. [Another] Sign for them
is that We carried their kind on a loaded ark.
42. We built for them similar [ships]
to let them sail upon them.
43. Had it pleased Us, We would have drowned them all,
and nobody would have helped them.
They would not have been saved
44. without Our mercy
and would not have enjoyed [life] a little longer.

45* They were told:
"If you fear what was before you
and what will be after you,
then, perhaps, you will be pardoned."

46. But not a single Sign of the Signs of their Lord
had come to them that they have not rejected.
47. They were told:
"Contribute of what God has given to you."
But the disbelievers say to the believers:
"Why should we feed the ones
that God could feed if He pleased?"
Indeed, you are in plain error!

48. And they also say:
"When will the promise come true
if you're telling the truth?"
49. They can expect nothing but a Shout,
which shall overtake them
in the midst of their disputes!
50. They will have no time to draw a will
or to return to their families!

51. At the sound of the trumpet,
they will rush from their graves to their Lord,
52. saying:
"Oh, woe to us! Who raised us up from our place of repose?"
— But this is what the Compassionate had promised,
and the Messengers have been telling the truth!
53. Verily, just one Shout,
and they shall be all brought before Us.
54. No soul on that Day shall be wronged in the least,
and you shall be repaid only for your deeds.

55* Verily, on that Day the dwellers of the Garden
shall rejoice at their work.
56* They shall recline with their spouses
on thrones in the shade,
57. where they shall have fruit
and everything they ask for.
58. And the Word of the Merciful Lord will be: Peace!
59. On this Day, you, sinners, step aside!

60. O children of Adam!
Have I not ordered you not to worship Satan,
your open enemy,
61. but to worship Me?
This is the right path.
62. [Satan] has led astray many of you,
will you not comprehend?
63. Here is Hellfire that has been promised to you!
64. You shall enter it today for your disbelief!

65*On this Day We will seal their mouths
to let them speak to Us with their hands
and witness about their deeds with their feet.
66. If it pleased Us,
We would blind their eyes
to let them grope for their path!
But then, how would they see?
67. If it pleased Us,
We would chain them to their place!
But then, how would they advance or return?

68* We cripple the bodies of those
to whom We grant a long life.
Will they not understand?

69. We have not taught poetry [to Muhammad] —
that is not proper for him!
This is a Reminder and a lucid Koran
70. to warn the living
and denounce the disbelievers.

71. Do they not see the cattle in their possession
among the things We have made with Our hands?
72. We tamed them for them,
some for riding, some for eating,
73. and for other uses and drinks.
Then, why are they so ungrateful?

74. Why have they taken other gods besides God
and hoped that these would help them?
75* But they will not be able to help
when they are driven all in one troop!
76. So, do not let their words grieve you —

indeed, We know very well
what they hide and what they reveal.

77. Is it not plain to man
that We have created him from sperm?
And yet, he is [Our] staunch opponent
78. when he makes Us equal to others
and forgets how he was created.
He says:
"Who can revive some rotten bones?"
79. Say:
"They can be revived by the One,
Who has created them from the beginning
and is well informed about the whole creation.
80. He is the One, who gives you the fire
from the green trees that you use for kindling.
81. Is the Creator of the Heavens and the earth
unable to create [others] like them?"
Yes, He can!
Indeed, He is the Creator, the All-Knowing.

82. If He wills a thing, He says to it:
— Be! And it appears.
83. So glorify the One,
Who holds all things in His Hands —
indeed, to Him you shall return!

V. 1: The rhyme "een" and "oon" of the sura lends it a tone of sorrow, often appropriate for the recitation of the Koran.

V. 6: The ancestors lived under the preceding Revelations as Christians or Jews; the people who had not received these Revelations directly live under the third Revelation — the Koran.

V. 11: A preacher succeeds when the audience is already on his side. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John, 18:37).

V. 18: "Omen" or "bird" — birds were used in divination.

V. 21: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel… " (1 Thess. 4:16).

Vv. 33f: The Koran convinces people by Signs (S.74:16). Any manifestation of God's power and benevolence is also a Sign. One Sign should suffice to convert a disbeliever. In reality this is not so; hence the disappointment: "So why are they not thankful?"

The Koran mentions the Signs about three hundred times. Each verse can be considered as a Sign, and the Koran as a collection of Signs. All the manifestations of Nature, all the creatures, are Divine Signs carrying part of God's Revelation.

V. 37: Darkness ensues when the day is withdrawn from the night. Obviously, what is meant here is spiritual darkness.

V. 45: "If you fear what was before you and what will be after you," i.e., if you fear the past and the future, or the punishment on earth and the punishment in the Hereafter.

V. 55: People will experience full lives in Heaven without any set-backs and disappointments. However, We do not know how closely life in Heaven will resemble life on earth.

V. 56: It has already been said that the believers will be joined in Paradise by their believing children (S.52:21).

V. 65: "Their deeds," lit., "what they have earned."

V. 68: "We cripple the bodies" — We make them feeble.

V. 75: The pagans will be judged together with their idols.

III. Stories about the Prophets

Sura 37 The Ranks. ***The third group of suras contains stories about Biblical and Arabian Prophets. The stories are extremely stylized because what matters is not the event, but its message. There is little concern for the temporal sequence of events; only an occasional phrase or word identifies the characters, the time, and the place. The protagonists are all alike, be they Noah's family or ancient Arabs.***

In spite of its length, S.37 is remarkable for its smooth transitions and uniform rhythm and style. Judging by its opening oath and short verses, it is one of the oldest suras, but with so many references to the Associators it may be seen as an introduction to the next group of suras: IV. Attitude toward the Other Religions.

S.37 consists of a short oath, a doxology, a story about the mischiefs of the Demons, a Sign and a Warning passage, a defense of the Prophet, and a description of the Hereafter. The sura centers on Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Elias (Elijah), Lot and Jonas. It ends with a Warning to the Associators and a doxology.

37. THE RANKS

Meccan, 182 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by those who stand in ranks,
2. who relentlessly fight back
3. and recite the Reminder!

4. Verily, your God is One!
5* He is the Lord of the Heavens and earth
and what is in between.
He is the Lord of the Easts!
6. Verily, We have bedecked the lower sky
with stars for splendor
7* and for protection against all the rebellious Satans
8* to prevent them from overhearing the Heavenly Conclave.
They are assailed from everywhere,

9. and if they do not retreat,
they shall get an everlasting punishment!
10* And if anyone of them steals [a single word],
he will be pursued by a blinding flame!

11. — [O Muhammad!] Ask them
whom it was more difficult to create:
them or the other creatures We have made?
Indeed, We have made them from sticky clay.

12. You wonder, but they sneer;
13. they are reminded, but they do not remember.
14. And when they see a Sign, they scoff at it
15* and say: "This is plain magic!
16. Is it possible that we shall be raised
after we die and become dust and bones,
17. we, and our forefathers too?"
18. Say:
"Yes, and you'll be covered with shame!"
19* Just one Shout, and they will open their eyes,
20. and they shall say:
"Woe to us, Judgment Day has come!"

21. Yes, this is the Day of Selection you used to deny!
22. [O Angels!], round up the wrong-doers,
their wives and whatever they worshiped
23. besides God!
Lead them on the road to the Blazing Fire,
24. then stop them and ask:
25. "What is the matter with you,
why don't you help one another?"

26. Yes, today they are submissive.
27. Accusing one another,
28* they say:
"It's you who forced us!"
29. [The latter] say:
"No, you were faithless yourselves!
30. We had no power over you —
indeed, you're a people of rebels!
31* Now the Word of our Lord against us has come true,
and we'll taste [the punishment] for sure.
32. We misled you, and we ourselves went astray."

33. Verily, on that Day they shall share the punishment!
34. Verily, this is how We deal with the sinners!
35. Verily, when told that there is no god except God,
they bristled with pride
36* and said:
"What! Shall we leave our gods
for the sake of a demented poet?"

37. But no! He came with the Truth
to vindicate the Messengers.

38. Verily, you shall taste a painful punishment
39. in retribution for all you have done —
40. [you], but not the devoted servants of God!

41. Their allotted provision
42* is the fruit [of their deeds]. They are honored
43. in the Gardens of Bliss.
44. They face one another on couches.
45. A cup from a fountain is passed around
46. with clear water, delicious to drink,
47. that does not inebriate nor fatigue.
48* With them are the wide-eyed ones with modest gazes,
49. like guarded eggs!

50. They will turn to one another with questions.
51* One of them will say:
"I had a friend
52. who said: 'Were you one of those who believed
53. that we'll be brought to judgment
after we died and became dust and bones?'"
54. He will hear:
— Look [at him]!
55. He will look and see him in the midst of the Fire;
56. he will say:
"By God! You've almost caused my ruin!
57. If it weren't for my Lord's favor,
I'd have been brought into it myself!
58. We'll not die
59. after the first death,
and we'll avoid the punishment!"
60. Verily, this will be a great achievement
61. For the sake of it, let all the toilers toil!

62. Is this reward not better than the Zakkum-tree
63* of which We made an ordeal for the wrong-doers?
64* This tree grows from the depth of Hellfire,
65. and its fruits resemble the heads of Satans.
66. Verily, they shall consume it, filling their bellies,
67. washing it down with a boiling drink
68. before they are returned into the Blazing Fire.

69. They found that their fathers were deep in error,
70. and now, they are driven in their footsteps!
71. Many of their forefathers had gone astray before,
72. even though We were sending them Warners.
73. And now see the end of those who were warned,
74. but not those who dutifully served God!

75* Noah called to Us, the best of Respondents.
76. We saved him and his family from a mighty distress
77. and spared his offspring.
78. With his posterity We left [the greeting]:

79. Peace upon Noah in the Worlds!
80. This is how we reward those who do good —
81. indeed, he was one of Our believing servants.
82. And then We drowned all the others.

83. One of his successors was Abraham.
84. He used to approach his Lord with a pure heart.
85. Once he said to his father and to his folks:
"What are you worshiping?
86. You deceive yourselves
when you look for other gods besides God!
87. What's your idea of the Lord of the Worlds?"
88* He glanced at the stars
89. and said:
"I'm really sick!"
90. They turned away from him and departed.
91. Then he approached their gods and said:
"Why don't you eat?
92* What's wrong with you? Why don't you talk?"
93. And he approached closer,
hitting them with his right hand.
94. When [the people] hurried back to him,
95. he said:
"How can you worship what you've carved yourselves?
96. It's God, Who created you and everything you've made!"
97. They said:
"Build a furnace and cast him into the blazing fire!"
98. And they started plotting against him.
99. [Abraham] said:
"Verily, I'm turning to my Lord,
and He will show me the right way.
100. O my Lord! Give me a righteous [son]!"
101. And We cheered him up with the news of a gentle boy.

102* When his son was old enough to share his work,
[Abraham] said to him:
"O my Son! I saw in a dream that I sacrificed you.
Tell me, what do you think of that?"
[The son] said:
"O my Father! Act as you were told.
You'll find me compliant if God wills."
103. When they submitted themselves [to God's Will],
and [Abraham] laid [his son] face down,
104. We called to him:
— O Abraham!
105. You have fulfilled [your] vision!
This is how We reward those who do good.
106. Verily, that was a real test!
107. We ransomed [his son] with a splendid victim,
108. and with the posterity We left [the greeting]:
109. — Peace upon Abraham!
110. This is how we reward those who do good —
111. indeed, he was one of Our believing servants.

112. We gave him the good news of Isaac,
a Prophet among the righteous,
113. and We blessed both him and Isaac.
Among their offspring some did right,
and [others] openly wronged their souls.

114. We bestowed a favor upon Moses and Aaron:
115. We rescued them and their people from a great distress.
116. We helped them, and they were successful.
117. We gave them a lucid Scripture
118. and guided them on the right way.
119. And with the posterity We left [the greeting]:
120. — Peace upon Moses and Aaron!
121. This is how we reward those who do good —
122. indeed, they were both Our believing servants.

123. Verily, Elias was one of the Messengers.
124. He said to his people:
"Don't you fear God?
125. How can you invoke Baal
and forsake the best of Creators —
126. God, your Lord and your forefathers' Lord!"
127. But they rejected him.
They will surely be called [to punishment],
128. but not the devoted servants of God.
129. And with the posterity We left [the greeting]:
130* — Peace upon Eliacin!"
131. This is how we reward those who do good —
132. indeed, he was one of Our believing servants.

133. Verily, Lot was one of the Messengers.
134. We rescued him and all of his family,
135. except an old woman who lagged behind.
136. Then, We destroyed the others.
137. You pass by [their ruins] mornings
138. and nights, so why do you not understand?
139. Verily, Jonas was one of the Messengers.
140. He fled on a laden ship,
141. and he lost at throwing lots.
142. A fish swallowed him — indeed, he was to blame!
143. Had he not been of those who praised Us,
144. he would have stayed in its belly till Resurrection Day.
145. We cast him sick on a barren shore,
146. and We grew over him a plant, a kind of gourd.
147. We sent him to a hundred thousand people or more,
148. and We gave them a reprieve after they trusted him.

149* — [O Muhammad!] Ask them if it is possible
that daughters were for your Lord
and sons for themselves?
150. Have We created the Angels female,
and have they witnessed [it]?

151. But no! All they say are inventions.
152. "God begat…" They are liars, indeed!
153. Could He have preferred daughters to sons?
154. What is wrong with you if such is your belief?
155. Why do you not wisen up,
156. or do you have some clear authority?
157. Then produce your scripture if you are telling the truth!

158. They invented a kinship between [God] and the Jinn,
albeit the Jinn know that they shall be judged.
159*Glory to God! [Exalted He is] above what ***they*** associate,
160. but ***not*** His devoted servants!
161. Verily, you and whatever you worship
162. cannot mislead [anyone] about Him —
163. indeed, you shall burn in the Blazing Fire!

164. Everyone has a designated place.
165. Verily, we are standing in ranks.
166. Verily, we glorify [Him]!

167. Some of them say:
168. "Had the Reminder come to us from our forefathers,
169. surely, we would have been devoted servants of God."
170. But they rejected [the Koran], and soon they shall know!
171. Our Word has preceded Our servants, the Messengers,
172. that they shall be helped,
173. and that, verily, Our hosts shall overcome!

174. Turn away from them for a while,
175*then look at them again,
and soon they shall look back [at you]!

176. Are they not hastening Our punishment?
177. But when it descends in their court,
evil shall be that morning for those who were warned!
178. Turn away from them for a while,
179. then look at them again,
and soon they shall look back [at you]!

180. Glory to your Lord, the Lord of Greatness.
[Exalted He is] above what they ascribe [to Him].
181. Peace to the Messengers,
182. and praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!

Vv. 1-3: The Angels stand in ranks to repel the Demons.

V. 5: About the plural of "East," cf. S.55:17.

V. 7: About the rebellious Satans or Jinn, cf. S.72:1f.

V. 8: "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves to the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job, 1:6).

V. 10: The "blinding flame" might be a meteor.

V. 15: Pretending that the Signs are feats of magic is disbelieving in God.

V. 19: “A Shout” or a “frightening cry.”

V. 28: “It’s you who forced us!,” lit., “it’s you who came to us from the right [side].” The adjective “right” is applied to everything pure, righteous, beneficent. The word “left” characterizes everything impure, evil, rebuked. For example, the people of the right hand are the righteous and the people of the left hand are the sinners. Another example: Abraham hits the idols with his right, virtuous hand (v.93). Theologians believe that God has two right hands; He uses either His right hand (S.39:67) or both hands.

V. 31: “The Word ... has come true” or “we have been judged.”

Vv. 31 and 32: These verses could be switched around.

V. 36: Crazy, **majnun**, i.e., possessed by the Jinn.

V. 42: “The fruit [of their deeds]”: their spiritual gifts.

V. 48: Here the Huris are described, but not called by name (cf. S.52:20; S.56:35-37).

V. 51: “The friend” is called here “a qarina” (cf. S.50).

V. 63: “An ordeal” — **fitna**, a word with many meanings: trial, judgment, or the choice between good and evil. At the beginning it also meant persecution; later on it was used to designate revolt or civil war.

V. 64: From “the bottom” or from “the root” of Hell.

Vv. 88-89: To be left alone, Abraham pretended to be sick.

V. 92: An idol is recognized by his inability to speak.

V. 98: They started their intrigues after they failed to burn Abraham in the furnace.

V. 102: According to the Koran, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Ishmael, but in Gen. 22:2, Abraham was told to immolate his “only son Isaac.” But Ishmael was 14 years older than Isaac, and, therefore, at the time of this event ***he*** was the only son, and not Isaac. The Muslims believe that Abraham’s ordeal took place in the vicinity of Mecca, sanctified by the rites of pilgrimage, and not at “Moriah” in Palestine (Gen. 22:2). The child is asked for his consent in the Koran, but not in the Bible, and so, for a Muslim, the Biblical version suggests the pagan sacrifice of a child to Moloch and not a free act of devotion.

V. 130: **Eliasin** instead of Elias (Elijah), for rhyme’s sake.

V. 149f: God could not have daughters (Cf. S.53).

V. 159: Association to God is an odious sin. “Associators” (**mushtarikin**) are first the pagans and then the Christians, for their worship of the Prophet Jesus. In a general sense, the term Associator can be applied to those who believe in magic feats and superstitions, in healing amulets and astrology, and even to Muslims who do not practice the basic rites of their religion and to scholars who make a fetish out of science.

Vv. 180: “[Exalted He is] above what they ascribe [to Him]”or “[Free He is] of what they ascribe [to Him].”

Muslim theologians have elaborated a sophisticated mystical representation of God based on the postulate that God is the Truth, the Reality, the Absolute. The best known version of the degrees of Reality is the system of Five Divine Presences:

1) God as “He” or “Him.” It is the perfect, absolute reality to which nothing can be added and nothing can be subtracted, it is God as defined in S.112.

2) God as Allah, the absolute Being. This manifestation of the divine is one step below God as “He.” Allah is the Compassionate, the Merciful. God as Being interacts with His Creation, and man in particular. God participates in the two opposing acts of giving and taking.

This polarity and complementariness is mirrored in the contrasting but not opposing pairs such as male/female, light/darkness, sin/virtue. These pairs are resolved in unity and agreement, and not in conflict or mutual destruction. This is why dualism as conceived in many Western and Eastern religions is a hateful heresy for Muslims.

3) The World of Power symbolized by the Throne of God. It comprises the Angels who execute the orders of God. As man is superior to Angels by virtue of God's choice and his intellect, he will be included in the World of Power after Judgment Day.

4) The World of Dominion symbolized by the footstool of God (**al-kursi**). It comprises the Jinn and rampant evil and doubt.

5) The World of the Human, created in the image of God, yet representing the material, the obvious, the totally manifest.

SURA 51 THE SCATTERING. ***S.51 is a composite sura consisting of loosely knit stories and appeals. It is difficult to spot its main intention or even its general direction. A mystical introduction (vv. 1-23) leads to the stories of the Biblical Prophets Abraham, Moses, and Noah and the Arabian pre-Islamic Prophets of 'Ad and Thamood (vv. 24-46).***

The Koran has a large number of protagonists from man to inanimate objects that live, act, and fulfill God's will. Traditionally, literary figures draw life from consecutive bits of information about their likeness, feelings and actions; and each plot is expected to have a temporal and spatial back-drop. Here all is different. The protagonists appear from the thickness of words heavy with meaning and expressive metaphors; the sinners emerge from the fire of remorse and the righteous from the Light of faith. The field of action is the whole world, Heaven and earth. Such is the colorful world of the Koran, such is its amazing language.

51. THE SCATTERING

Meccan, 60 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* [I swear] by those who scatter far and wide,
2. who carry a burden,
3. who gently speed by
4. and distribute the commands.

5. What has been promised to you is true,
6. and, verily, Judgment will surely come!

7. [I swear] by the sky and its paths
8. that, verily, your words are conflicting,
9* and the deluded ones are deluded by them.

10. Death to the liars
11. mired in deception!
12. They ask:
"When will Judgment Day come?"
13. It is the Day
when they shall be tried by the Fire!
14. Have a taste of your trial —
is it not what you were so eager to hasten!

15. Verily, the God-fearing shall be
amidst Gardens and springs,
16. receiving their Lord gifts
for their past good deeds.
17. They used to sleep little at night,
18. and at dawn they prayed for forgiveness;
19. and in their wealth there was a part
for the asking and the poor.

20. There are Signs on earth for the believers!
21. Some of them are in yourselves — do you not see?
22. But in Heaven is your sustenance
and what has been promised to you.
23. [I swear] by the Lord of the Heaven and earth,
that this is as real as your ability to speak!

24. Has the story of Abraham's honored guests reached you?
25. They came to him, and said: "Peace!"
He said: "Peace!" [and thought]:
"These people are so strange!"
26. Then he hastened to his family
and brought [the meat] of a fattened calf.
27. Setting it before them, he said:
"Wouldn't you like to eat?"
28* He felt afraid of them, but they said:
"Don't be scared"
and announced to him [the birth of] a wise son.
29. His wife came forward crying,
slapping her face, and saying:
"I'm a barren old woman!"
30. They said:
"Thus spoke your Lord! He's the Wise, the All-Knowing."
31. Abraham said:
"O Envoys! What's your mission?"
32* They said:
"We're sent to sinful people
33. to pelt them down with stones of [baked] clay
34. reserved by your Lord for those who do wrong."

35. We pulled out of there all the believers,
36* and found Muslims only in one household.
37. We left there a Sign for those
who dread a harsh retribution.

38. And Moses...
We sent him to Pharaoh with clear authority.
39. But he turned away with his courtiers and said:
"He's a sorcerer or a madman!"

40. We seized him together with his army
and cast them all into the sea —
guilty he was indeed!

41. And 'Ad...
We sent against them a devastating wind,
42. which spared nothing in its path
and reduced everything to rubble.
43. And Thamood — they were told:
"Enjoy [life] a little longer!"
44. but they rebelled against their Lord's command.
Then a thunderbolt hit them as they were looking.
45. They could not stay on their feet nor protect themselves.
46. And before them the people of Noah —
they were sinful people indeed!

47. We have built the sky with Our Hands
and We stretched it out wide!
48* We have spread forth the earth,
and how well We spread [it]!
49. We have created everything in pairs —
perhaps you will reflect
50* and hurry up to God!

"In truth, He [has sent] me as your lucid Warner!
51* Do not set up another god besides God.
In truth, He [has sent] me as your lucid Warner!"

52. No Messenger has ever come to their predecessors
without them saying:
"He's a sorcerer or a madman"
53. and then passing [these words] along.
Yes, these people have transgressed all limits!
54. So, turn away from them — for that you will not be blamed,
55. and keep warning, for Warning is useful to the believers!

56* I have created Jinn and men
to make them worship Me alone.
57* I do not need any provisions from them,
I do not need their food!

58. Verily, He is God, the Provider,
the All-Mighty, the Powerful.
59. Verily, the fate of those who do wrong
will be like the fate of their predecessors.
So it is better for them not to hurry!
60. Woe to the disbelievers on their promised Day!

V. 1-4: The words of this oath are simple and direct, and they are not addressed only to the contemporaries of Mohammad, but to all the people in the world. Theologians and philosophers might recognize in these words a mystic meaning and see Angels, Demons, cosmic maelstroms, and fast currents of celestial matter — indeed, unlimited is the fantasy of man. Most probably this oath is about the Angels bringing God's gifts to man. Oaths remind man that not

all is accessible to him, and that there is between God and him an ineffable spiritual realm to which he might partake if he deserves it by his good deeds.

V. 9: "Deluded by them are the deluded ones" meaning that are deluded only those who seek delusion.

V. 28: Abraham was scared when he understood that his visitors were Angels because they could not eat (in the Bible they do eat). To offer and to accept hospitality is a strong tradition in the Middle East to the present time.

V. 32: An introduction to the Biblical story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom. In the following suras stories about the Prophets are enriched by new details. The Prophet's audience must have liked these stories that inspired and uplifted them, and the Prophet used them to show that all the Messengers had the one and same mission — to transmit to man the eternal spiritual Truth.

V. 36: "Muslims," or "those surrendering themselves to God."

V. 41f: According to ancient accounts and legends, South Arabia was inhabited by the people of 'Ad since 2000 B.C. who made successful incursions into Egypt and Mesopotamia (Egypt was seized by the Hyksos in the 17th century, but their relation to 'Ad is uncertain). The people of Madyan lived in Northern Arabia and was contemporary with Abraham (17th century B.C.) and Moses (14th); they prospered till our era. They built their dwellings and temples in the mountains, and, presumably, they can be identified with the Nabateans whose capital city was Petra. After their decline, the people of 'Ad was replaced by that of Samood in Southern Arabia — some localities in Arabia are named after their Prophet Salih.

V. 48: If the earth is flat like a rug, it can be spread and rolled up.

Vv. 50-51: These words are spoken by the Prophet.

V. 51: The proclamation that God is One is as important in Islam as the confession of faith "In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" in Christianity. The profession of faith "There is no god but God (**la-illaha-illa-llah**), and Muhammad is the Messenger of God" inspired artisans, calligraphers, and architects to produce sumptuous objects of art. Muslim soldiers have it on their lips during an attack, and it is displayed in graceful arabesques on the Saudi flag and the banners of innumerable Muslim civic groups and organizations.

V. 57: The pagans used to offer food to their idols.

SURA 54 THE MOON. ***This sura, with its refrain "Such were My punishment and My Warning!" has some resemblance to S.51, but its tone is more quiet and its construction better balanced. It describes the nations who rejected their Messengers and chased them off their lands. For their misdeeds, God will "reward" the disbelievers with a double punishment: on earth and in the Afterlife. The moral of these stories is that people should learn from the mistakes of other nations and accept the admonitions of the Prophet before it is too late.***

54. THE MOON

Meccan, 55 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. The Hour is drawing near and the moon is split!
2. But when they see a Sign,

they turn away and say:
"This is a fleeting delusion!"

3* They have not believed
and have succumbed to their passions.
But each affair has its time!
4* To restrain them, they have been sent Messages
5. full of the highest wisdom.
But Warning did not help,
6. so, [o Muhammad], turn away from them!
On the Day when the Caller
summons them to the horrible [event],
7. they shall emerge from their graves,
their eyes downcast, like scattered locusts,
8. and rush to the Caller.
The disbelievers shall say:
"What a difficult Day!"

9. The people of Noah have denied before them.
They rejected Our servant, saying:
"He's a madman!" and chased him away.
10. He called to his Lord:
"Help me! They have defeated me!"
11. Then We opened the gates of the sky,
and water poured down.
12. We gushed springs from the earth,
and water gathered by Our command.
13. We carried [Noah] on [an ark]
made of planks [tied] with palm fibers.
14. It floated before Our eyes —
such was the reward for the rejected one!
15. We left this as a Sign,
but who remembers [it] now?
16* Such was My punishment and My Warning!

17. We have made the Koran easy to remember,
but who remembers [it] now?

18. The people of 'Ad disbelieved [as well].
Such was My punishment and My Warning!
19. On a day of unceasing distress,
We sent upon them a destructive wind
20. [which] scattered people like uprooted palm-trees.
21. Such was My punishment and My Warning!

22. We have made the Koran easy to remember,
but who remembers [it] now?

23. And [the people of] Thamood rejected [their] Warner.
24. They said:
"Is he not a man like us?
Why should we follow him?
That would be an error and a folly on our part!

25. Why has the Reminder been sent to him,
[and not to someone else] in our midst?
Indeed, he's an insolent liar!"
26. — Tomorrow they shall know
who is an insolent liar!

27. To test them We sent them a she-camel.
— [O Salih!] Watch them and brace yourself!
28. Tell them to share water [with her]
and to drink in turns.
29. But they called their companion
who took a knife and hamstrung her.
30. Such was My punishment and My Warning!
31. We sent upon them a single blast,
and they became like sticks used by a fence builder.

32. We have made the Koran easy to remember,
but who remembers [it] now?

33. And the people of Lot rejected the Warning,
34. so We sent upon them a storm of rocks!
At dawn We rescued only Lot's family
35. by Our mercy: this is how We reward the grateful!
36. [Lot] had warned them about Our retribution,
but they disregarded the Warning
37. and tried to divert his guests.
[In retaliation] We blinded their eyes:
— Let you taste My Wrath and My Warning!
38. In the morning they were hit by an abiding punishment:
39. — Let you taste My Wrath and My Warning!

40. We have made the Koran easy to remember,
but who remembers [it] now?

41. The Warning came to the people of Pharaoh,
42. but they denied all Our Signs and We grasped them
by the grasp of the Mighty, the Powerful.
43* Are your disbelievers any better than they?
Or is there an excuse for you in the Scripture?
44. They say:
"United we'll win!"
45. But the moment they are united,
they will run away showing their backs.
46. The Hour is indeed promised to them,
and that Hour shall be the most scary and bitter!
47. Verily, the sinners are in error and madness.
48* On the Day they are dragged face down into the Fire
[they will hear:]
— Let you taste the touch of the Saqar!

49. Verily, We have created everything in good proportions.
50* And Our Command is executed in the twinkling of an eye!
51. We have destroyed the likes of you in the past,

but who remembers [it] now?
52. All their deeds [are] in the Book —
53. they are recorded, small and great!

54. Verily, the God-fearing shall be
amid Gardens and rivers
55. by the throne of Truth,
before the almighty King!

V. 3: "Each affair has its time," i.e., every man will be judged at the time designated for him.

V. 4: "Messages" — "news" in the original.

V. 43: "In the Scripture" — "in the Psalms" in the original.

V. 48: The Saqar: one of the circles of Hell (S.101:11).

V. 50: "Our Command" — the impending Judgment (cf. S.37:31).

SURA 15 AL-HIJR. ***S.15 is named Al-Hijr after an area or a town that belonged to the tribe of Thamood (v.80). Its complexity suggests that some of its passages belong to the Medinan period; it deals with the disbelievers who have rejected their Messengers; it presents the episode of Adam and Iblis, and tells the stories of the Prophets. Although the stories are expanded and enlivened by protracted dialogues, the characters are distilled to the bare essentials, so that at times they seem shadowy and unreal. As elsewhere, the moral of the story is more important than the fine points of the narrative. S.15 is rich in metaphors and unusual expressions.***

15. AL-HIJR

Meccan, 99 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Alif lam ra.
These are some Verses from the Scripture,
from the lucid Koran!

2. The time may come when the disbelievers
would wish to become Muslims,
3* but leave them alone for the time being,
let them feast and enjoy themselves,
let them bask in their wishes —
indeed, they will know soon enough!

4. We have never destroyed a town
without warning it about its fate.
5. No nation can speed up or retard its destiny!
6. [The disbelievers] say:
"O you who has received the Reminder!
You're really possessed!
7. Why don't you come to us accompanied by Angels
if you're one of the truthful?"

8* — We send Angels only for a just cause;
otherwise [the sinners] would not have a respite.

9. We have truly sent down the Reminder
that We truly intend to protect!
10. And before you, We used to send [Messengers]
to ancient communities,
11. but no Messenger had ever come without being derided.
12* Thus We implant in the hearts of the sinners
13* disbelief [in God].
The ways of the Ancients belong to the past.
14. If We opened to them the gate of Heaven,
they would rush through it,
15. saying:
"Our eyes were beclouded,
yes, we were a people bewitched!"

16. We have set up constellations in the sky
that We beautified for the beholders.
17* We have guarded it from Satans, the stoned ones.
18. And if one of them listens on the sly,
a bright flame shall chase him away!
19. We have spread up the earth,
We have strewn upon it mighty mountains,
and We have grown on it everything in good measure.
20* We have given on it provisions to you
and to those for whom you are not accountable.
21. Nothing exists that is not in store with Us,
and We release everything in measured amounts.
22* We send fecundating winds
and pour water from the sky
to let it quench your thirst,
although you are not its keepers.
23. Verily, We dispense life and death,
and We shall inherit [all things].
24. We know which of you is going ahead,
and which of you is lagging behind.
25. Verily, your Lord shall round them all up —
indeed, He is wise and all-knowing!

26. We have created man
from resounding clay, from molded mud.
27. And earlier We have created the Jinn from scorching wind.
28. Your Lord said to the Angels:
— I will create man from baked clay, from molded mud.
29. After I give him form
and fill him with My Spirit,
prostrate yourselves before him.
30. The Angels prostrated themselves in a body,
31. but not Iblis, who refused to join
those who prostrated themselves.
32* [God] said:
— O Iblis! Why are you not with those
who prostrated themselves?
33. He said:

“I’m not going to prostrate myself before a man
whom You’ve created
from resounding clay, from molded mud!”
34. [God] said:
— Get out of here, you, the stoned one,
35. and be accursed till Judgment Day!
36. [Iblis] said:
“O my Lord! Grant me a reprieve till Resurrection Day!”
37. [God] said:
— Reprieve is granted to you
38. till the appointed Day.
39. He said:
“O my Lord! Since You’ve led me into sin,
I’ll tempt [the people] on earth and seduce them [all],
40. except Your devoted servants.”
41. [God] said:
— They are all on the straight path to Me!
42. You have no power over My servants,
only over the sinners who will follow you.
43. Verily, the abode promised to them is Hell.
44* It has seven gates, each gate for one group.
45. Verily, The God-fearing shall be amid Gardens and springs:
46. — Come inside in peace and confidence!
47. We will remove all bitterness from their hearts
and they shall be brothers, facing each other on thrones.
48. Tiredness shall not touch them,
and they shall not be asked to leave.

49. — [O Muhammad!] Announce to My servants
that, verily, I am the Forgiving, the Merciful.
50. But, verily, a painful punishment shall be My retribution!

51. Tell them about Abraham’s guests.
52. They came to him and said: “Peace!”
He said:
“We’re really afraid of you!”
53. [The guests] said:
“Don’t be afraid! We’re bringing you the glad tidings
of [the birth] of a wise son.”
54. [Abraham] said: “How can I rejoice at this news
if old age has already touched me?
What good is there in your announcement?”
55. [The guests] said:
“Don’t despair: we’re bringing you
some truly good tidings!”
56. [Abraham] said:
“Only the sinners lose faith in God’s mercy.
57. O Envoys! What’s your mission?”
58. [The guests] said:
“We have been sent to a people of sinners
59. of whom we’ll save only Lot and his family,
60. but not his wife: we know she’s one of those
who will be left behind!”

61. When the Envoys came to the family of Lot,
62. he said:
"You're an alien people!"
63. [The Envoys] said:
"Yes, and we came to you
with something [many] have qualms about.
64. We're bringing you the Truth and we're trustworthy.
65* Let your family leave at night, then follow in their steps.
Let no one turn around, but proceed whereto you'll be told!"
66. We announced to him the Command
that those left behind shall be mowed down by the morning.

67* When the city dwellers came out,
exulting at the news [of the visitors],
68. [Lot] said:
"They are my guests, so don't dishonor me.
69. Fear God and don't put me to shame!"
70* [The people] said:
"Have we not forbidden you to entertain outsiders?"
71. [Lot] said:
"Here are my daughters, if you must have your way."
72. — By your life, [O Prophet!],
they wandered aimlessly in their drunkenness!
73* And at sunrise a blast overtook them.
74* We turned everything upside down
and rained upon them rocks of baked clay.
75. Verily, there are Signs in this
for those who foresee the future,
76. indeed, [the ruins of the sinners] are along the road.
77. Verily, there is a Sign in this for those who believe!

78* Verily, the dwellers of Al-'aika were sinners as well,
79. and We took revenge upon them.
[The ruins] of both are along the road for everyone to see!

80* And the people of Al-Hijr rejected the Messengers.
81. We had been sending them Our Signs,
but they turned away from them.
82. They excavated dwellings in the mountains for security.
83. But a blast overtook them early in the morning,
84. and what they had hoarded did not help them!

85* We have created the heavens and the earth
and what is in between only for a just cause.
And verily, the Hour is near!
So turn away [from them] with dignity!

86. Verily, your Lord is the Creator, the All-knowing.
87* We gave you the seven often repeated [Verses]
and the glorious Koran!
88* So do not covet what We gave to others.
And do not grieve over them,

but spread your wing over the believers
89. and say: "Truly, I'm a clear Warner."

90* We are sending [the Message] also to the Dividers —
91. to those who tear the Koran to sections.
92. By your Lord, We will bring them to account
93. for everything they have done.

94. Preach as commanded to you and shun the Associators!
95. We are sufficient to you against those who mock
96. and associate other gods to God.
Soon they shall know!
97. We know how disheartened you are by their words.
98. So celebrate the praise of your Lord
and be among those who prostrate themselves.
99* Serve your Lord before the Inevitable comes to you!

V. 1: The word **aya** usually means "Sign" (S.74:16), but here it is obviously "Verse."

V. 3: "Soon they shall know" — about their fate.

V. 8: With "a just cause," lit., "in Truth." The Angels come down to earth only to collect the souls of the dying.

V. 12: "Sinner" — wrong-doer, criminal (**mugrim**).

V. 13: "They forgot the ways of the Ancients" or "the ways of the Ancients have been changed." This verse may be understood in different ways (S.10:102). According to S.48:23, the ways of the Ancients cannot be changed — here they seem to have been abrogated.

V. 17: According to tradition, when he was getting ready to sacrifice his son, Abraham chased Satans away by throwing rocks at him. Hence, one of the rites of pilgrimage consists in throwing rocks at three pillars erected where Satan had bothered Abraham.

V. 20: "Those for whom you are not responsible": people and the other living creatures.

V. 22: Strong winds often carry away the topsoil.

Vv. 32f: The dialog between God and Iblis recalls the opening of the Book of Job. In the Prophetic suras, the utterances of the protagonists are preceded by "he said' or "they said." The exchanges are easier to follow if the names of the speakers are brought in square brackets before the quotations. The dramatic effect can be still enhanced, as follows:

53. THE GUESTS: "Don't be afraid!
We're bringing you the glad tidings
of [the birth] of a wise son."
54. ABRAHAM: "How can I rejoice at this news
if old age has already claimed me?
What good is there in your announcement?"
55* THE GUESTS: "We're bringing you some really good tidings,
so don't despair!"
56. ABRAHAM: "Only those who are astray lose faith in God's mercy.

V. 44: The different groups referred to are religious sects — Gnostics, Nestorians, Monophysites, Marcionites, Valentinians, etc. Some of them rejected the ignominious death of Christ on the cross.

V. 65: In the steps of the family or the Angels?

V. 67: They greeted Lot's guests with sinful intentions.

V. 70: "Outsiders" lit., "the Worlds," or from all the world.

'**Alamin** (worlds) is a cognate of the Hebrew ***'olam,*** signifying "all creation" or "all the universe."

V. 73: The end of the world will be announced by the sound of a trumpet, by a noise, or by a desperate shriek (S.37:2).

V. 74: Burnt clay **(sijjil)** is a kind of hard volcanic rock.

V. 78: "The dwellers of **Al-'aika**," "the dwellers of forests," also known as **Madyan** (S.91:11).

V. 80: **Al-hijr**, like Ar-rass (S.50:12), was a locality or a clan on the territory of Thamood between Syria and Medina.

V. 85: Cf. v.8. In the Koran, the word "Truth" is one of the symbols of human hopes (Truth is God).

V. 87: "The seven often repeated [Verses]," i.e., S.1.

V. 88: "Do not covet," lit., "do not strain your eyes at." God did not give wealth and sons to the Prophet Muhammad.

The "wing" is the wide sleeve of a caftan or the symbol of the prophetic mission.

V. 90: The Dividers **(Muqtasimin)** are "those who tear the Koran into sections," i.e., those who select parts of the Scripture and reject or hide others: they are the opportunists who recognized in the Koran only what best served their interests. Unfortunately, many Muslim communities are ruled nowadays by such miscreants.

V. 99: The "Inevitable" is death and the Last Judgment.

SURA 26 THE POETS. ***S.26 should have been called "The Prophets" because it gives the longest and most balanced descriptions of Prophetic missions (Moses, vv. 10-69; Abraham, vv. 70-104; Noah, vv. 105-122; Hood, vv. 123-140; Salih, vv. 141-159; Lot, vv. 160-175; and Shu'aib, vv. 176-191). The narratives are framed between repeated Warnings and Signs. Their brisk dialog is suitable for the transposition showed in the Note to S.15:32f. This stylistic variation makes the verbal exchanges more meaningful and lively. It is more important to convey the meaning of the Book as closely as possible, even at the price of some stylistic innovation in translation, rather than to fuddle it by sticking to an archaic style. The poets are condemned at the very end of the sura, in vv. 224-226.***

26. THE POETS
Meccan, 227 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ta sin mim.
2. Here are some Verses from the lucid Scripture.

3. — [O Muhammad!] Perhaps you are ready
to kill yourself from grief
because they refuse to believe.
4. If it pleased Us, We would have sent down to them
a Sign from Heaven
before which they would have bowed their heads.

5. But not a single of the Reminders from the Compassionate
ever reaches them without them turning away.
6. They deny them, but soon some news will reach them
about what they were scoffing at!
7. Do they not see when they look at the soil
that We have produced on it so many noble pairs?
8. Verily, there a Sign in this,
but most of them still disbelieve.
9. Verily, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

10* Your Lord called to Moses:
— Go to the sinful people,
11. the people of Pharaoh. Would they not fear [God]?
12. [Moses]:
"O my Lord! I'm afraid they'll reject me.
13. My chest is tight and my tongue is in knots —
send me Aaron [for help].
14. They accuse me of a crime
and I'm afraid they'll kill me."
15. — No, by no means!
Go forth with Our Signs, the two of you,
and We will be listening with you.
16. Go to Pharaoh and say:
"We're truly the Messengers of the Lord of the Worlds.
17. Release the Children of Israel to us!"

18. [Pharaoh]:
"Haven't we raised you as a child?
Haven't you spent many years among us?
19. Didn't you commit the crime you know about?
Then, why are you so ungrateful!"
20* [Moses]:
"I committed it when I was astray
21. and I fled because I feared you,
but my Lord granted me wisdom and made me a Messenger.
22. Is your enslaving the Children of Israel
the favor you're blaming me for?"

23. Pharaoh:
"Who's the Lord of the Worlds?"
24. [Moses]:
"He's the Lord of the Heavens and the earth,
and what is in between if you want the truth."
25. [Pharaoh] to those around him:
"Did you hear him?"
26. [Moses]:
"He's your Lord and your forefathers' Lord."
27. [Pharaoh to the crowd]:
"The Messenger who came to you is really insane!"
28. [Moses]:
"[He's] the Lord of the East and the West,
and what is in between if you have any sense!"

29. [Pharaoh]:
“If you serve any god other than me,
I’ll surely throw you in prison!”
30. [Moses]:
“And if I show you something convincing?”
31. [Pharaoh]:
“Show it if you’re telling the truth!”

32. [Moses] cast his staff,
and it turned into a live snake.
33. He drew out his hand,
and everybody saw it was white.
34. [Pharaoh] to the attendants around him:
“Yes, he’s a clever magician,
35. and by his magic
he wants to drive you out of your lands.
What’s your advice?”
36. [The attendants]:
“Let him and his brother wait,
while you send recruiters to the cities
37. in order to bring you the craftiest magicians.”

38. The magicians gathered on the appointed day.
39. The people were asked:
“Are you all here?”
40. [The People]:
“Yes, and we’ll follow the magicians if they win!”
41. The magicians to Pharaoh upon their arrival:
“Is it true that we’ll be rewarded if we win?”
42. [Pharaoh]:
“Yes, and I’ll make you [my] retainers.”
43. Moses [to the magicians]:
“Cast what you wanted to cast!”
44. [The magicians] cast their ropes and staves, [saying]:
“By the power of Pharaoh we shall win!”
45. Then Moses cast his staff,
and it swallowed their fakes.
46. The magicians prostrated themselves,
47. saying:
“We do believe in the Lord of the Worlds,
48. the Lord of Moses and Aaron.”
49. [Pharaoh]:
“How dare you believe in Him without my permission?
Surely, he’s your master,
the one who taught you magic!
But soon you shall know!
I’ll cut off each of you a hand on one side
and a foot on the other,
and then I’ll crucify you all!”
50. [The magicians]:
“We can’t care less, for we’ll return to our Lord!
51. We only wish that our Lord forgave our errors
and that we were the first to believe!”

52. We inspired Moses:
— Depart with My servants at night:
you will certainly be pursued.
53. Pharaoh sent recruiters to the cities,
54. [and said]: "Their band isn't that big,
55. and though they're furious at us,
56. there are many of us, and we've been warned!"
57. We expelled them from gardens and springs,
58. from treasuries and honorable positions.
59. And so it was!
And We made the Sons of Israel inherit it all.

60. [Pharaoh's armies] pursued them at sunrise.
61. When the two parties came in view of each other,
Moses's companions [said]:
We'll be overtaken for sure!"
62. [Moses]:
"No, by no means! Verily, My Lord is with me,
and soon He'll show me the way!"

63. We inspired Moses:
— Strike the sea with your staff!
And it parted, the sides overhanging like huge mountains.
64. We let them engage therein,
65. and We saved Moses and those who were with him.
66. And the others We drowned.
67. Verily, there a Sign in this,
yet most of them do not believe.
68. Verily, your God is the Mighty, the Merciful.

69. Tell them the story of Abraham.
70. [He said] to his father and to his people:
"What are you worshiping?"
71. [The people]:
"We worship idols and revere them."
72. [Abraham]:
"Do they hear you when you call to them?
73. Do they benefit you or harm you in any way?"
74. [The people]:
"No, but we know our fathers [served them]."
75. [Abraham]:
"Look at what you worship,
76. following your forefathers!
77. Indeed, ***they*** are my enemies,
but not the Lord of the Worlds,
78. Who has created me and guided me,
79. Who gives me food and drink,
80. Who heals me when I am sick,
81. Who will take my life,
and then will revive me,
82. and Who, I hope,
will forgive my sins on Judgment Day.

83* O my Lord!
Give me wisdom and join me to the righteous.
84. And let my posterity keep a good memory of me.
85. Make me an inheritor of the Garden of Bliss!
86. Forgive my father for going astray.
87. Don't put me to shame on Resurrection Day,
88. the Day when neither wealth nor children will help,
89. when only the one
who comes to God with a pure heart will be saved."

90. The Garden shall be brought near the God-fearing,
91. Hellfire shall be displayed
to those who went astray.
92. They will be told:
— Where are those you worshiped
93. besides God?
Did they help you or did they help themselves?
94. They will be cast [into Hellfire]
together with those who went astray,
95. together with the hosts of Iblis!

96. While arguing among themselves, they will say:
97. "By God, indeed, we were in blatant error
98. when we associated to the Lord of the Worlds.
99. Only criminals could have misled us!
100. And now we're left without an intercessor
101. and a sincere friend.
102. But we would join the believers
if we were allowed to return!"
103. Verily, there a Sign in this,
yet most of them still do not believe.
104. Verily, your God is the Mighty, the Merciful.

105. The people of Noah rejected the Messengers.
106. Their brother Noah said to them:
"Won't you fear [God]?
107. I'm your faithful Messenger,
108. so fear God and obey me.
109. I'm not asking you for a reward —
my reward is with the Lord of the Worlds!
110. So fear God and obey me!"
111. [The People]:
"How can we believe you
if you are followed by the lowest of us?"
112. [Noah]:
"What do I know about their deeds?
113. Their account is with my Lord, don't you understand?
114. I wouldn't drive the believers away.
115. I'm just a plain Warner."
116. [The People]:
"O Noah! You'll be stoned if you don't quit!"
117. [Noah]: "O my Lord! My people reject me.
118. Decide fairly between us and save me
and the believers who are on my side!"

119. We saved him and his followers in a laden ship,
120. and then, We drowned the others.
121. Verily, there is a Sign in this,
but most of them still do not believe.
122. Verily, your God is the Mighty, the Merciful.

123. 'Ad rejected the Messengers as well.
124. Their brother Hood said to them:
"Won't you fear [God]?
125. I'm your faithful Messenger,
126. so fear God and obey me!
127. I'm not asking you for a reward —
my reward is with the Lord of the Worlds!
128. You raise a landmark for amusement on every hill.
129. You build castles, hoping to live in them for ever.
130. You oppress [people],
as [only] tyrants can oppress!
131. So fear God and obey me!
132. Yes! Fear the One, Who gave you everything you know,
133. Who gave you cattle and sons,
134. gardens and springs.
135. Verily, I fear for you the punishment of the Great Day!"
136. [The people]:
"We don't care whether you warn or don't warn us.
137. These are just some superstitions of the Ancients,
138. and we're not of those who will be punished."
139. They rejected [the Messenger], and We destroyed them.
Verily, there is a Sign in this,
but most of them still do not believe.
140. Verily, your God is the Mighty, the Merciful.

141. And Thamood also rejected the Messengers.
142. Their brother Salih said to them:
"Won't you fear [God]?
143. I'm your faithful Messenger,
144. so fear God and obey me!
145. I'm not asking you for a reward —
my reward is with the Lord of the Worlds!
146. Are you secure amid all your possessions —
147. amid gardens and springs,
148. amid fields and palm-trees with edible clusters,
149. amid the houses
you skillfully excavate in the mountains?
150. So fear God and obey me!
151. And don't follow the profligate
152* who corrupt the land
instead of doing good deeds."
153. [The people]:
"You're one of the bewitched,
154. and you're a mortal like us.
Show us a Sign if you're telling the truth!"

155. [Salih]:
“Here’s a she-camel. She has to drink
like you have to drink on appointed days.
156. Don’t harm her, lest you shall be overcome
by the punishment of the Great Day!”
157. But they hamstrung her and regretted it later
158. when the punishment came upon them.
Verily, there is a Sign in this,
but most of them do not believe.
159. Verily, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

160. The people of Lot rejected the Messengers.
161. Their brother Lot said to them:
“Won’t you fear [God]?”
162. I’m your faithful Messenger,
163. so fear God and obey me!
164. I’m not asking you for a reward —
my reward is with the Lord of the Worlds!
165. Of all the creatures in the Worlds,
you’re the only ones to go after the males,
166. abandoning the wives your Lord has created for you!
You’re a people of transgressors!”
167. [The People]:
“O Lot! If you don’t stop it,
surely you’ll be expelled!”
168. [Lot]:
“How I loathe your comportment!
169. O my Lord! Save me and my family from their doings!”

170. We saved him and his family, all of them,
171. except an old woman who stayed behind.
172. Then We wiped out all the others.
173. We pelted them with rain —
dreadful was that rain
for those who were warned!
174. Verily, there is a Sign in this,
but most of them do not believe.
175. Verily, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

176. And the people of Al-’aika rejected the Messengers.
177. Their brother Shu’aib said to them:
“Won’t you fear [God]?”
178. I’m your faithful Messenger.
179. So fear God and obey me!
180. I’m not asking you for a reward —
my reward is with the Lord of the Worlds!
181. Give a full measure, don’t cheat,
182. and use an accurate balance to weigh.
183. Don’t steal the people’s possessions,
and don’t walk in the land spreading evil.
184. Fear the One, Who created you and the first people.”
185. [The people]:
“You’re one of the bewitched!

186. You're a mortal like us, and we know you for a liar!
187. Make a piece of the sky fall upon us
if you're telling the truth!"
188. [Shu'aib]:
"My Lord is well aware of your deeds!"
189. But they rejected him,
and the punishment of the Day of Darkening hit them,
the punishment of the Great Day!
190. Verily, there is a Sign in this,
but most of them do not believe.
191. Verily, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

192. Verily, this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.
193. The faithful Spirit descended with it
194. into your heart to make you warn
195. in the clear Arabic tongue,
196* as [revealed] in the Books of the Ancients.
197. Is it not a Sign that this was known
by learned men among the Children of Israel?
198. Had We sent [the Revelation] down to a foreigner
199. to recite it to them,
they would not have believed in it.

200. We let [disbelief] sink into the hearts of the sinners,
201. so that they would not believe
until they see the painful punishment
202. that shall suddenly hit them unawares.
203. Then they will say:
"Won't we get a reprieve?"

204. — But are they not the ones who hastened Our retribution?
205. See, if We let them enjoy a few more years
206. before [Our] warning comes true,
207. their enjoyment would not benefit them!
208. We have not destroyed a single town
before sending them Warners
209. to remind them — indeed, We are never unjust.
210. The Revelation is not from the Satans:
211. it does not suit them, it is beyond their power;
212. they cannot even eavesdrop upon it!
213. Therefore, to avoid punishment,
do not call to any other god, except God.
214. Warn your kin
215. and take under your wing
the believers who are following you.
216. And to those who disobey you, say:
"I'm not responsible for your deeds!"
217. Put your trust in the Mighty, the Merciful,
218. Who sees you standing up
219. and bowing with those who prostrate themselves.
220. Indeed, He is the Hearer, the Knowing.

221. Shall I tell you upon whom do the Satans descend?

222. — They descend upon every despicable sinner,
223. filling his ears [with rumors] —
indeed, most of them are dissemblers!

224. And the Poets? They are followed only by sinners!
225. Do you not see them, wandering in the valleys,
226. preaching what they themselves do not do?
227. They are not of those who believed,
did right, remembered God oftentimes,
and fought back only when oppressed.
The oppressors shall soon learn
how their fate will turn out!

V. 21: "When I was astray," lit., "when I was among the ones who went astray." By the rules of Arabic versification, all the verses of a poem or a sura, or, at least, extended passages, must have the same rhyme. Grammatical forms such as the well-sounding Arabic plural endings are a rich source of rhyming words.

Vv. 83-89: A rare example of a prayer in the Koran.

V. 152: "Instead of doing good deeds" or "instead of improving themselves," or "instead of improving it [the land]."

V. 196: "The Books of the Ancients," lit., "the Psalms".

The Koran mentions David's Psalms (**zubur**) as a separate Scripture.

SURA 20 [THE LETTERS] TA HA. ***The main subject of this sura is an expanded and dramatized story of Moses that includes his confrontation with Pharaoh and his dealing with the golden calf. One gets the impression that S.20 consists of unrelated passages revealed at different periods of the Prophet's mission, as one can gather from abrupt changes in style and content (e.g., Aaron is present in some passages and absent in others). The story of Moses is accompanied by sundry advice and appeals that include a piece on Adam, who was a reprobate before he became a Prophet and received the Reminder from God.***

20. [The Letters] TA HA
Meccan, 135 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Ta ha.
2. We have sent the Koran down to you not to upset you,
3. but to make you warn the God-fearing
4. [by a] Message from the Creator of the earth
and the lofty Heavens,
5. the Compassionate firmly established on the Throne.

6. To Him belongs everything in the Heavens and earth,
everything between them and underground.
7. Say something aloud, and He knows about it,
be it secret or concealed.
8. He is God! There is no god, but Him.
To Him belong the most magnificent Names!

9. Did the story of Moses reach you?
10* Once, he saw a fire and said to his family:
"Stop! I see a fire!
I might fetch you from it a burning brand
or I might find some guidance by the fire."

11. When he reached it, he heard:
— O Moses!
12. Verily, I am your Lord!
Remove your shoes for you are in the holy valley of Toowa.
13. You are My chosen one,
so listen to what I will inspire to you!
14. I am God! There is no god, but Me.
So worship Me and establish the prayer in My remembrance.
15* Verily, the Hour is near! I keep it secret,
so that every soul might be rewarded according to her merit.
16. Do not let those who do not believe
and follow their passions
distract you from it, lest you perish.
17. [God] said:
— O Moses! What is in your right hand?
18. [Moses]:
"It's my staff. I lean upon it,
I beat [leaves] down with it for my sheep,
and I have other uses for it."
19. — O Moses! Cast it down!
20. He cast it down, and it became a writhing snake.
21. — Do not be scared, seize it,
and We will restore it to what it was before.
22* — Now, press your hand to your side,
and it shall come out white without harming you.
This is another Sign,
23. and to let Us display to you the greatest of Our Signs,
24. go to Pharaoh who has transgressed all bounds!

25. [Moses]:
"O my Lord! Expand my breast,
26. lighten my task,
27* and loosen my tongue
28. to let them understand my speech.
29* And give me a deputy from my family,
30. my brother Aaron,
31* to bolster my strength
32. and to share my task.
33. We'll glorify You relentlessly
34. and remember You often,
35. indeed, we're in Your sight!"

36. — O Moses! Granted is your request!
37. Truly, We have shown you Our favor in the past
38. when We inspired your mother
with what We have inspired:

39* — Put your child in a chest and cast it in the river.
The river will push it to the shore
and Our common enemy will pick him up.
— [O Moses!] I took you in My affection
to let you grow in My sight.

40. Then your sister came forth and said:
"Let me show you someone
who will take good care of him."
Thus, We returned you to your mother
to cool her eyes and to stop her grief.
When you killed a man, We saved you from trouble
and submitted you to many a test.
You have stayed many years with the people of Madyan,
and now, o Moses, you came here as preordained.
41. I have chosen you to serve Me.
42. So, you and your brother take My Signs
and, without ceasing remembering Me,
43. go to Pharaoh — indeed, he has transgressed all bounds!
44. Talk to him amiably —
perhaps he will come to his senses or fear [God].
45. [Moses and Aaron]:
"O our Lord! We're afraid that he'll insult us
or resort to violence!"
46. — Do not be afraid: indeed, I will be by your side,
listening and watching.
47. Go to him together and say:
"We're the Messengers of your Lord.
Stop tormenting the Sons of Israel
and let them go with us!
We come to you with a Sign from your Lord.
Peace be on him who follows the Guidance,
48. for it has been revealed to us that anyone
who disbelieves and turns away shall be punished!"

49. [Pharaoh]:
"O Moses! Who is your Lord?"
50. [Moses]:
"Our Lord is the One Who shaped all things
and then provided Guidance."
51. [Pharaoh]:
"And what about the former generations?"
52. [Moses]:
"Knowledge about them is in my Lord's Book.
My Lord doesn't err and doesn't forget!
53. He is the One Who spread the earth for you like a bed,
traced tracks on it for your use,
and sent you water down from the sky!"
[God]:
— With its help We grow various plants in pairs
54. to let you eat and graze your cattle.
Verily, there are Signs in this for those who understand!
55. We have created you from [the earth],

into it We will return you,
and then from it We will restore you again.

56. We showed [Pharaoh] all Our Signs,
but he rejected [them] and turned away.

57. [Pharaoh]: "O Moses!
Did you come to drive us from our lands by your magic?
58. We'll surely counter you with similar magic!
Call a meeting that will be convenient for both sides
at a place where chances are equal."
59. [Moses]:
"Let the meeting be on Decoration Day
and let the people assemble at midday."

60. Pharaoh retired to devise his plan; then he returned.
61. [Moses to Pharaoh and his men]:
"Woe to you! Stop slandering God,
lest He destroys you by His punishment.
A liar won't be successful!"
62. They discussed the matter among themselves,
but kept their deliberations secret.
63. [Pharaoh's men]:
"O Pharaoh! It's clear that these two magicians
want to chase you from your lands by their magic
and abolish your exemplary institutions.
64. Therefore, confer among yourselves
and tighten your ranks:
lucky will be the one who wins today!"

65. [The magicians]:
O Moses! Will you throw first,
or shall we start throwing?"
66. [Moses]:
"Yes, let you throw!"
It seemed to him that their ropes and staves
began to move under their spell.
67. Moses felt fear in his soul.
68. We said:
— Do not be afraid, indeed, advantage is in your court!
69. Throw what you hold in your right hand,
and it shall swallow their fakes,
for these are just some magic tricks.
A magician shall never succeed no matter where he goes.
70. [The magicians], prostrating themselves:
"We believe in the God of Aaron and Moses!"
71. [Pharaoh]:
"How dare you believe in Him without my leave!
Your leader is surely [Moses] —
he's the one who taught you witchcraft!
So from each of you I'll cut off
a hand on one side and a foot on the other,
and then I'll crucify you on trunks of palm-trees!

Then you'll know for sure whose punishment
is the most painful and the most lasting!"
72. [The magicians to Pharaoh]:
"We'll never put you above the Proofs that came to us,
and above the One, Who created us!
So, decide what you want to decide,
but you can decide [only] in the present life!
73. We have truly believed in our Lord.
Let Him forgive us our errors
and the magic you've forced upon us.
God is the best and the most lasting!"

74. Verily, for anyone who appears before his Lord
as a sinner, there will be Hellfire
in which he shall neither die nor live.
75. But for anyone who appears before Him
as a believer and does good deeds,
there will be the highest levels:
76. the Gardens of Eden under which the rivers flow,
where they shall remain for ever.
Such is the reward for those who stay pure!

77. We inspired Moses:
— Leave with My servants at night
and open a dry path for them through the sea.
Do not fear to be overtaken, do not fear [anything]!
78. Pharaoh followed them with his forces,
but the sea swallowed them as swallow it can —
79. indeed, Pharaoh misled his people
instead of guiding them right.

80. — O Children of Israel!
We rescued you from your enemy,
We gave you a Covenant at the right side of the mountain,
and We sent down to you manna and quails.
81. Eat of the good things We are supplying you with,
but in moderation, lest you incur My wrath —
indeed, anyone who incurs My wrath shall perish!
82. But, verily, I am forgiving for those
who repented and believed,
did good works, and followed the Guidance.

83. — O Moses!
Why are you running away from your people?
84. [Moses]:
"They are the ones who run in my tracks,
and I'm rushing to You, o my Lord, to please You."
85* [God] said:
— In your absence We submitted your people to a test,
but As-Samiri misled them.

86. Moses returned to his people angry and grieving.
He said:

"O My people!
Didn't your Lord make you a good promise?
Or had you waited for the promise too long?
Or do you want the wrath of your Lord to crash upon you,
and that's why you broke your promise to me?
87. [The people]:
"We've not broken our promise to you willingly.
We have been forced to bring loads
of [golden] ornaments from the people
and to throw them [into the fire],
as As-Samiri had been throwing them."

88. When he cast for them the likeness a lowing calf,
they said:
"This is your god and Moses' God he has forgotten about."
89. Did they not see
that [the calf] was not responding to their words,
and that it could neither harm nor benefit them?

90. Aaron had been warning them:
"O my people! This is a test for you.
Verily, your Lord is the Compassionate,
so follow me and obey my command!"
91. [They answered:]
"We'll continue to worship [the calf]
until Moses returns to us!"
92. [Moses]:
"O Aaron! When you saw that they were going astray,
what prevented you
93. from obeying me? Didn't you defy my command?"
94* [Aaron]:
"O Son of my mother's!
Don't grab me by my beard and my hair!
I was afraid you'd say:
'You've sown division among the Children of Israel
and disobeyed my word!'"
95. [Moses]:
"And you, As-Samiri, what will you say to that?"
96* [As-Samiri]:
"When I saw that nobody was looking,
I took a handful of dust from the track of the Messenger
and cast it inside [the calf], as my soul had inspired!"
97. [Moses]:
"Begone! To the end of your days
you'll have to warn [every passerby]:
'Don't touch me!'
And verily, the promised [punishment] will not spare you.
Look at the god you worshiped so keenly:
we'll burn it and scatter its ashes over the sea."
98. Verily, your God is One God!
There is no god besides Him,
and His Knowledge extends to all things.

99. — [O Muhammad!]
We are telling you about past events
and We have sent you a Reminder from Us.
100. Anyone who turns away from it
shall carry a burden on Resurrection Day
101. for all eternity.
Grievous shall be this burden on Resurrection Day,
102* the Day when the trumpet is blown,
the Day when We gather all the wrong-doers!
With eyes turned white [by terror],
103* they will whisper to one another:
"You tarried there only ten [days]!"
104. We will know best what they are talking about
when the most devout of them says:
"You tarried there only one day!"

105. If they ask you what will happen to the mountains, say:
"My Lord will scatter them like dust
106. and level them to a smooth plain
107. on which you will see no curves and no bumps."
108* On that Day they shall follow the Caller
[on a path] without curves.
All voices shall be hushed before the Compassionate,
only a rustle shall be audible to you.
109* No one shall benefit from intercession on that Day,
except those allowed by the Compassionate,
and whose word He will be satisfied with.
110* He knows what they have brought in their hands
and what they have left behind.
But they cannot encompass that with [their] knowledge!
111. Humbled shall be their faces
before the Living, the Self-existing.
Anyone carrying a load of evil shall lose all hope,
112. but anyone who does good works and believes
shall not fear injustice or deprivation.
113* We have sent down an Arabic Koran,
with detailed explanation of some Admonitions —
perhaps they will fear God,
or they will wake up to remembering [Him].
114* Exalted be God, He is the King, He is the Truth!
— [O Muhammad!]
Do not be hasty with the Koran
until its revelation to you is completed,
and keep saying:
"O my Lord, increase my knowledge!"

115* In the beginning We made a Covenant with Adam.
But he forgot [about it] —
We found no firmness in him.

116. When We told the Angels:
— Prostrate yourselves before Adam,
they all complied, except Iblis, who refused.

117. We said:
— O Adam! Truly, he is your and your wife's enemy.
Do not let him drive you away from the Garden
and make you both miserable.
118. Verily, you shall never be hungry or naked,
119. nor shall you suffer from thirst and heat.
120*But Satan whispered to him:
"O Adam! Would you like me to lead you
to the Tree of Eternity and the invincible Dominion?"
121. They both ate [of the tree] and, discovering their shame,
stitched for themselves some leaves from the Garden,
Thus Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray.

122*Later on his Lord chose him,
forgave him, and guided him.
123*[God] said:
— Get out, both of you,
and be enemies to one another.
If My Guidance comes to you,
then anyone who follows My way
shall not err nor be miserable.
124. But anyone who turns away from My Remembrance
shall have a arduous life,
and on Resurrection Day We shall raise him blind.
125. He will say:
"O my Lord! Why have you raised me blind,
could I not see before?"
126. — On this Day, you shall be ignored
just as you ignored Our Signs when they came to you!

127. This is how We reward those who transgressed
and did not believe in the Signs of their Lord.
And the punishment in the Hereafter
shall be still stronger and more lasting!

128. Is it not a lesson for them
that We destroyed so many of the past generations?
Do they not walk in [the ruins of] their dwellings?
Verily, there are Signs in this for those who can reason!
129. If the Word of your Lord had not come before,
[the Judgment] would have surely taken place.
Instead, they have been given a definite time.

130. [O Muhammad!] Bear patiently everything they say.
Praise your Lord before sunrise and before sundown.
Praise [Him] during a part of the night,
and at the beginning and the end of the day —
then, perhaps, you'll be filled with joy!
131*Do not covet what We give to some couples
because the glitter of this life
is given to them to test their faith,
and your Lord's sustenance is better and lasts longer!
132*Enjoin the prayer on your family and persevere in it.

We do not ask you to sustain Us —
We are the One, Who sustains you,
and the fear of God tops it all!

133. [The disbelievers] say:
"Why doesn't he bring us a Sign from his Lord?"
— Have they not received the Proofs of the first Scriptures?
134. Had We destroyed them before by Our punishment,
they would have said:
"O our Lord! Had You sent us a Messenger,
we would've recognized Your Signs
and avoided shame and humiliation."
135. Say:
"Everyone is waiting, let you wait too!
Soon you'll know who took the smooth path,
and who accepted Guidance!"

V. 1: The initial letters of a few suras are used as names of people, like Taha (this sura) and Yaseen (S.36).

Vv. 10-12: According to the Bible, the burning bush episode happened near Mount Horeb (Exod. 3:1f). Muslim commentators place the valley of Toowa at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Vv. 15: "I keep it secret," or, perhaps, the opposite: "I divulge it." Linguistic ambiguities feed mystic ratiocinations.

V. 22: Lit., "press your hand to your wing." The verse can also be read "brace yourself, your hand doesn't deserve a blame."

V. 27: Lit., "loosen the knot on my tongue." Moses had a speech defect since childhood.

V. 29: "A deputy" or a minister or assistant — **wazir** (vizier).

V. 31; Lit., "to let him strengthen my back."

V. 39: "Our common enemy" — the Egyptians.

V. 85: In The Bible, the person directly responsible for the worship of the Golden Calf was Aaron himself. The Koran mitigates his guilt because a Prophet could not be such a miscreant. **As-Samiri**, mentioned only in this sura, is not a Biblical character. He might be an ancestor of the Samaritans.

V. 94: "Hair," lit., "head."

V. 96: The Messenger is either the Prophet or an Angel.

V. 102: "With eyes turned white [by terror]" — "their eyes turned blue" in the original.

V. 103-104: Ten days or one day are equal in eternity.

V. 108: The Caller is the Angel '**Asrafil**.

V. 109: Or "Only those who received permission from the Compassionate... will be allowed to intercede."

V. 110: "What they have brought in their hands and what they have left behind" — their future and their past.

V. 114: Wait until the revelation of the Koran comes to its end: indeed, only a completed Koran can be perfect.

Vv. 115-123: In the episode of Adam and Iblis, the latter was ordered to ***prostrate*** himself before Adam, but not to ***worship*** him. Worship would have contradicted mono-

theism and the refusal of Iblis would have been commendable (prostrations in front of an Oriental potentate are still common in the East).

V. 120: The tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9) is called, in the Koran, "the Tree of Eternity." However, eternal as it could be, it is "the Tree of Knoweldge of Good and Evil," judging by the effect eating its fruit had on Adam and Eve.

V. 121: Adam and Eve both ate from the forbidden tree; both disobeyed God. In the Bible, Eve is singled out as the culprit who incited Adam to sin against God (Gen. 3:1-6).

V. 122: "We chose him" in the sense: "We chose him to bestow Our Grace upon him."

V. 123: **Ihbita** (get out of here, both of you) is the dual form. In S.2:38, it is **ihbitu**: (get out, you all), Satan included.

V. 131: God allows some people to be richer than others.

V. 132: God is not a pagan idol that needs food offerings and sustenance. He is the One Who provides man with all he needs.

SURA 11 HOOD. ***Like S.26, with which it has much in common, S.11 recounts the stories of Biblical and Arabian Prophets, namely, Noah (vv. 25-49), Hood (vv. 50-60), Salih (vv. 61-68), Abraham and Lot (vv. 69-83), and Shu'aib (vv. 84-95). A few verses speak of Moses (vv. 96-99, 100). These stories are similar in style and conclusion, but they approach the Prophets from a somewhat different point of view than in S.26, where the style is concise and direct. Here, it is more ponderous, even convoluted at times, with an accumulation of Signs and Warnings, especially in the introduction and conclusion. S.11 obviously belongs to a late period, as evidenced, for example, by the use of the word "Proof" for Sign, and by a discussion of dissensions among the Jews in vv. 110-111.***

11. HOOD

Meccan, 123 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam ra.
[This is] a Scripture from the Wise and All-knowing
whose Verses based on Wisdom are explained in detail,
so that you would not worship anyone, except God.

2. [Say]:
"Verily, He has [sent] me to you
to warn and to bring good tidings.
3. Ask forgiveness of your Lord
and turn to Him in repentance,
then He'll give you a good provision
till your appointed time.
He bestows His Grace upon any one rich in Grace.
But if you turned away,
I'd fear for you the punishment of the Great Day.
4. To God is your return —
He has power over all things!"

5* They cover up their hearts in order to hide from Him,
but even if they wrap themselves in their garments,
He will know what they hide and what they disclose —

indeed, He knows well what is in the hearts!

6. There is not a single living creature on earth
whose existence does not depend upon God.
[God] knows where it settles and where it is kept —
everything is in a clear Book!

7* He is the One, Who has created
the Heavens and the earth in six Days.
His Throne was on the Waters.
This was to find out who of you is the best in deeds.
If you say to the disbelievers:
"Verily, you'll be raised after you die,"
they will surely say:
"That's nothing but plain magic!"
8. Yet if We delayed their punishment for a while,
they would surely say:
"What has kept it back?"
But on that Day, when it comes to them,
nothing shall save them from it,
and they shall be encircled
by what they were laughing at!

9. If We give a man a taste Our mercy,
and then We withdraw it from him,
he would be in despair and disbelief.
10. But if We allowed him to taste [Our] Grace
after he had suffered misfortunes,
he would surely say:
"Evil has left me!"
And he will start exulting and showing off.
11. But not those who are patient and do good works:
for them there is forgiveness and a great reward.

12* — [O Muhammad!] You might omit
part of what is inspired to you,
and your heart might feel tight when they say:
"Why hasn't a treasure been sent down to him,
or why didn't an Angel accompany him?"
But you are only a Warner,
and God is responsible for everything!

13. If they say:
"He invented [the Koran],"
Say:
"Bring up ten suras in its likeness,
and summon anyone you want besides God
if you're telling the truth!"
14. If they fail to respond,
then know that [the Koran]
has been sent down to you
with the knowledge of God,
and that there is no god, but Him.

So, would you not become Muslims?

15. We shall fully pay for their deeds
those who prefer this life with its frills.
16. They are those who cannot expect
anything in the Hereafter, except Fire.
Void shall be all their works,
and fruitless shall be all their deeds.

17. The believers are those who accept
the clear Verses of their Lord
that are read to them by a witness from Himself,
as the Book of Moses was read to them before —
this is Guidance and mercy [for mankind].
But the factions who reject it shall meet in the Fire.
Have no doubts about it:
this is the Truth from your Lord,
although most people do not believe.

18. Who does more evil than the one
who invents lies against God?
They shall be returned to their Lord,
and the witnesses shall say:
"These are the ones who lied about their Lord!
Let the curse of God be upon those who do wrong
19. by seducing others from God's way
and striving to make it crooked.
They are of those who deny the Hereafter!"
20. They shall not change anything on earth,
and they shall have no protectors, except God.
Their punishment shall be doubled —
indeed, they are blind and deaf!
21. They are of those who lost their souls;
their fabrications have abandoned them.
22. Surely, they shall suffer
the greatest losses in the Hereafter.
23. But those who have believed, have done good deeds,
and have been humble before their Lord,
shall dwell in Paradise and stay in it for ever.
24. Some of them can be compared
to those who do not see nor hear,
and others to those who hear and see.
Are they equal in this comparison?
Will you not come to your senses?

25. We sent Noah to his people. [He said]:
"Truly, I'm your lucid Warner.
26. Don't worship anyone besides God,
or I'll fear for you the punishment of the painful Day!"

27. The disbelieving chieftains of his people said:
"We see that you're a mortal like us,
and that you're followed only by the lowest

and the most immature of us.
We don't see that you exceed us in merit,
and, therefore, we think that you're liars!"

28* [Noah] said:
"O my people! Don't you see
that I have a Proof from my Lord?
He has bestowed upon me a Mercy to which you're blind,
but can we force upon you what you deny?
29. O my people!
I'm not asking you for a fee — my reward is only with God.
And I'm not going to drive the believers away —
indeed, they will surely meet with their Lord.
But I see that you are ignorant folks!
30. O my people!
Who would intercede for me before God
if I drove [the believers] away?
Will you not come to your senses?
31. I'm not telling you that I own God's treasuries
and know the Unseen; and I don't pretend to be an Angel.
I wouldn't say about those you despise
that God won't bestow upon them any favors —
indeed, God knows best what's in their souls —
otherwise, I would be doing wrong."
32. [The people] said:
"O Noah! By arguing with us you prolong our dispute.
Bring your threat upon us if you're telling the truth!"
33. [Noah] said:
"God will bring it upon you if He wills,
and you won't be able to avoid it!
34. Much as I desire to advise you,
my advice wouldn't help you
if God wanted you to go astray.
He's your Lord, and to Him is your return!"

35. — [O Muhammad!] When they say:
"He invented [the Koran],"
say:
"If I invented it, my sin would be upon me,
but I'm not guilty of your sins."

36. Noah received the inspiration:
— No one of your people will believe,
except those who already have faith.
So, do not grieve over what they do,
37. but build an ark in Our sight by inspiration from Us,
and don't talk to Me about the transgressors —
they shall be drowned, all of them!
38. [Noah] began to build the ark, and the chieftains
of his people mocked him each time they passed by.
He was saying to them:
"You're mocking us now, but our turn will come to mock you.
39. Soon you'll know

for whom there will be a humiliating punishment,
for whom there will be a lasting punishment!"

40* When Our Command was issued,
and the waters gushed out, We said:
— Embark a pair of each kind
together with your household and those who have believed,
but not those who have already been sentenced.
However, only a few shared his faith.
41. [Noah] said:
"Embark on it in the Name of God,
whether it sails or stands still!
Verily, my Lord is forgiving and merciful!"

42* When it sailed with them on waves [huge] like mountains,
Noah called to his son who was standing aside:
"O my son!
Come with us, don't stay with the disbelievers!"
43. He said:
"I'll climb a mountain to save myself from the flood."
[Noah] said:
"Today no one shall escape from God's Command,
except those upon whom He bestowed [His] mercy."
A wave came between them, and [the son] was drowned.
44* And it was said:
— O earth, swallow up your waters! O sky, stop [raining]!
The waters receded, the event was completed.
[The ark] stood firm on [Mount] Al-Djudi, and it was said:
— Down with those who do wrong!

45. Noah called to his Lord, saying:
"O my Lord! Surely my son is part of my family,
but Your promise is true —
indeed, You're the wisest of Judges!"
46. [God] said:
— O Noah! If he misbehaved, he is not part of your family.
Do not ask Me what you are not supposed to know.
I urge you not to be one of the ignorant!
47. [Noah] said:
"O my Lord! Protect me from asking You
what I'm not supposed to know.
Unless You forgive me and have mercy upon me,
I'll be among the losers!"
48. And it was said:
— O Noah! Disembark with peace from Us
and with blessings upon you and the nations
that will descend from those who are with you.
We will allow some nations to enjoy life
before We unleash upon them Our painful punishment.

49. Such are some stories of the Unseen
We are disclosing to you.
Neither you nor your people knew of them before.

Be patient:
the outcome will be [good] for the God-fearing!

50. [To the people of] ’Ad [We sent] their brother Hood.
He said:
“O my people!
Worship God! You’ve no other gods besides Him:
they are just your inventions.
51. O my people!
I’m not asking you for a fee —
my reward is only with the One, Who has created me.
Don’t you understand?
52. O my people!
Ask your Lord to forgive you and turn to Him.
He’ll send upon you a copious rain from the sky
and add strength to your strength.
So don’t turn away like the sinners!”
53. [The people] said:
“O Hood! What you’ve brought to us aren’t any Proofs.
We won’t abandon our gods just upon your word.
We don’t believe you!
54. We can only say that one of our gods
has struck you with evil.”
[Hood] said:
“I’m calling God to witness, and you’re witnesses too
that I’m innocent of your associating with Him
55. other [gods].
Now plot together against me without respite!
56. I’m putting my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord.
There isn’t any living creature
that He doesn’t hold by its forelock!
Verily, my Lord is on the straight path!

57. Even if you turned away,
I’ve delivered to you what I’d been sent with.
My Lord shall replace you by another people,
and you won’t harm Him in the least,
for my Lord is the guardian of all things!”

58. When We issued Our Command, by Our mercy
We saved Hood and those who had believed with him —
We saved them from a severe punishment.

59. And such were [the people of] ’Ad.
They spurned the Signs of their Lord,
disobeyed His Messengers, and followed the commands
of some inveterate lawbreakers.
60. A curse shall follow them
in this life and on Resurrection Day.
Indeed, ’Ad have not believed in their Lord,
therefore, down with ’Ad, the people of Hood!

61. [To the people of] Thamood [We sent] their brother Salih.

He said:
"O my people, worship God!
You've no other god, but Him.
He is the One, Who made you from the earth
and settled you on it;
so ask for His forgiveness and turn to Him.
Verily, my Lord is nearby, ready to respond!"
62. [The people] said:
"O Salih! We had expected much from you in the past.
Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers have served?
We're in great doubt about what you're calling us to."
63. [Salih] said:
"O my people! Consider that if I have the Proofs
from my Lord and that He has bestowed His mercy upon me,
who will protect me from God if I disobeyed Him?
You'll only increase my losses!
64. O my people!
This she-camel belongs to God, she is a Sign for you.
Let her graze on God's land, and don't harm her,
lest an impending punishment befalls you!"
65. But they hamstrung her, and he said:
"You can rejoice in your homes three more days
until this threat comes true!"
66. Once Our decision was made, by Our mercy
We rescued from the humiliation of that Day
Salih and those who had believed with him.
Verily, your Lord is the Strong, the Almighty.

67. A Shout overtook the wrong-doers,
and at dawn they were lying prostrate in their dwellings,
68. as if they had never flourished in them.
[The people of] Thamood have rejected their Lord,
therefore, down with Thamood!

69. Our [heavenly] Envoys came with good tidings
to Abraham and said: "Peace!"
And he said: "Peace!",
and hurried to bring a roasted calf.
70. When he saw that they did not extend their hands to it,
he became suspicious and felt afraid of them.
But they said:
"Fear not — we've been sent to the people of Lot."

71* His wife, who was standing by,
laughed when We gave her the good news
of [the birth of] Isaac to be followed by Jacob.
72. She said:
"Alas! How can I give birth when I'm so old?
Here's my husband, he's old, too.
That would really be an amazing thing!"
73. [The Envoys] said:
"Why are you surprised at God's decree?
O members of this household!

Let God's mercy and His blessings be upon you,
Verily, He is praiseworthy and full of glory!"
74. When Abraham's fear was dispelled,
and he received the good news,
he began pleading with Us for the people of Lot,
75. for Abraham was kind, sensitive, and striving to God.
76. [He heard]:
— O Abraham! Do not insist!
Your Lord's decision has already been issued
and a sure punishment is coming to them!

77. When Our Envoys came to Lot, he felt sorry for them,
knowing that he had no power to protect them, and he said:
"What a difficult day!"
78* Used to doing abominations, his people came rushing to him.
He said:
"O my people! Here are my daughters — they're purer for you.
Fear God and don't embarrass me before my guests.
Isn't there a single righteous man among you?"
79. [The people] said:
"You know it's not your daughters that we want,
you know very well what we're looking for!"

80. [Lot] said:
"If I only had power over you, or a mighty support!"
81. [The Angels] said:
"O Lot! We're the Envoys of your Lord.
They can't get at you!
Leave with your household before the end of the night
and let nobody look back, except your wife
who will share the fate of the rest.
Verily, morning is their appointed time,
and morning is already near."
82. When Our Decision was made,
We turned [their cities] upside down.
We rained upon them a hail of stones hard like baked clay,
83. and marked by your Lord.
[Punishment] is not far from those who do wrong!

84. To [the people of] Madyan [came] their brother Shu'aib.
He said:
"O my people, worship God! You have no god besides Him.
Don't measure or weigh short.
I see that you're doing well, but I fear for you
the punishment of the Overwhelming Day.
85. O my people!
Measure and weigh accurately,
don't defraud the people of their possessions,
and don't commit evil in the land
by giving yourselves to corruption.
86* If you're believers, the best for you
is what God has bequeathed to you —
but your guardian I'm not!"

87. [The people] said:
"O Shu'aib! Does your religion demand of you
that we abandon what our fathers used to worship,
and that we stop managing our property as we like?
Are you not kind and just?"
88. [Shu'aib] said:
"O my people! Don't you see
that I've the Proofs from my Lord?
Didn't He provide me with a good sustenance?
Would I want for myself what I'm forbidding you?
I want to help you mend your ways as much as I can,
and I rely upon God alone —
in Him I trust, and to Him I turn!
89* O my people!
Let not my disapproval lead you to sin,
lest what happened to the peoples of Noah,
Hood, and Salih shall happen to you.
And the people of Lot isn't far from you!
90. Ask your Lord to forgive you and turn to Him,
for my Lord is merciful and loving!"
91. [The people] said:
"O Shu'aib! We don't understand much of what you say,
but you're a weakling in comparison to us.
If it weren't for your clan, we would've stoned you —
you're not that prominent among us!"
92. He said:
"O my people! Is my clan more important to you
than God to Whom you've turned your backs?
Verily, God encompasses all what you do!
93. O my people!
Act as you want, and I'll act [as I want].
Soon you shall know who gets a humiliating punishment
and who is a liar.
So watch, and I'll be watching with you!"
94. When Our decision was issued, by Our mercy
We rescued Shu'aib and those who believed with him.
But the Shout came upon the wrong-doers, and in the morning
they were lying prostrate in their dwellings,
95. as if they had not flourished in them in the past.
Madyan went away, as Thamood went away!

96. We sent Moses with Our Signs and a clear authority
97. to Pharaoh and to the chieftains under Pharaoh's command.
But how unjust were Pharaoh's commands!
98. On Resurrection Day he shall lead his people
and bring them straight to the watering place in the Fire.
Awful is the watering place to which they shall be led!
99. A curse shall follow them in this [life],
and on Resurrection Day, awful shall be the gift
that they will receive!

100. These are some of the events regarding the towns
We are telling you about. Some of them are standing,

and [others] are already mown down.
101. We have not wronged them — they have wronged themselves.
When God's decision was issued,
whatever they worshiped besides God
didn't help them in the least.
It only aggravated their fall!
102. Such is the hold of your Lord
over the towns for their evil-doing —
painful and violent is His grasp!
103. There is a Sign in this for those
who fear the punishment of the Hereafter.

The Day when all the people are gathered together
will be the Day of Witnessing.
104. We will delay it only a little.
105. And when that Day comes,
no soul shall dare speak without His permission.
Then some shall feel miserable, and others elated.
106. The miserable ones shall be in the Fire,
where there shall be nothing but sighs and sobs.
107. They shall stay there for the duration of Heavens and earth,
unless your Lord wills it otherwise —
indeed, your Lord acts as He wills!
108* And the happy ones? They shall stay in Paradise
for the duration of Heavens and earth,
unless your Lord wills it otherwise.
And this gift shall endure for ever!
109. — [O Muhammad!]
Do not be troubled by whatever they worship:
they worship what their fathers had worshiped before.
Verily, We will pay them a full price for their deeds!

110* We gave a Scripture to Moses, but they disagreed about it.
Had it not been for an earlier Word of your Lord,
the matter between them would have been resolved,
but they have strong doubts about it!
111. Your Lord will surely pay them a full price for their deeds.
He is well informed of what they do.

112. Let you and those who turned with you [to God],
be firm as commanded, and do not transgress —
indeed, all your deeds are in His sight!
113. Do not side with the evildoers
or the Fire shall also engulf you.
You shall have no protectors besides God,
and nobody shall assist you!

114. Stand up for prayer at the beginning
and the end of the day, and at the approach of the night.
Good deeds cancel the bad ones!
This is a Reminder for those who remember.
115. Be patient!
Verily, God will not waste the reward of the righteous.

116. How is it, that except the few We have saved,
so few were virtuous in the former generations,
who could have forbidden corruption on earth?
But the wrong-doers pursued the good things
that were given to them and continued to sin.

117*Your Lord will never destroy a town for one transgression
if their people are willing to amend.
118. Had your Lord so willed,
He could have made one nation of all the people.
But they continue to argue,
119. except those upon whom God has bestowed His mercy —
indeed, He created them to confer it to them!
The Word of Your Lord will come true:
— I will fill Hellfire with Jinn and men, together!

120. We are telling you these stories about the Messengers
to fortify your heart — indeed, they bring you the Truth,
and they are a Warning and a Reminder to the believers.
121. Say to the disbelievers:
"Do what's best for you, and we'll do [what's best for us]!
122. Wait, and we'll be waiting [too]!"

123. To God belongs the Unseen in Heavens and on earth,
and each affair returns to Him.
So worship Him and trust Him —
indeed, your Lord is not unmindful of your deeds!

V. 5: To hide from God is to leave the real world for the realm of empty dreams and material values.

V. 7: Water, so essential to life, is an apt metaphor for the creative power of God, indeed, His Throne is upon the Waters.

V. 12: Occasionally the Prophet doubted his ability of transmitting the Koran accurately and completely.

V. 28: "Proof," "evidence," or "clear explanation" (**bayina**), implying the use of reason, as opposed to "Sign" (**aya**).

V. 40: God rescued all the righteous and not only Noah and his family. "Water gushed out," lit., "the oven boiled over."

V. 42: The Bible does not mention this son of Noah's.

V. 44: Is **Al-Djudi** a mountain in Arabia or is it Mt. Ararat?

V. 71: Sarah laughed when she overheard the Angels announcing the birth of a son to the centenarian Abraham.

Vv. 78, 79: Obviously, Islam does not condone homosexuality.

V. 86: The best part of an estate is that which remains after one gives away generous contributions.

V. 89: "Isn't far from you" — in time or in space?

V. 108: The punishment will not be eternal, as the Christians understand it, but temporary, until the present world ends (God is free to replace the present Universe by another Creation).

V. 110: God grants a respite to men to allow them to repent.

V. 117: "Just one sin" — probably, polytheism.

SURA 7 THE HEIGHTS. ***The Arabic name of this sura (Al-a'raf) means "The Heights" or "The Barriers" (cf. v. 48). Long as it is, S.7 is easy to follow. Like S.20 it starts with a statement that the Prophetic mission requires much emotional exertion. Then Warning passages frame the stories of Iblis and the fall of Adam (vv. 11-27), and the parallel descriptions of the missions of Noah (vv. 59-64), Hood (vv. 65-72), Salih (vv. 73-79), Lot (vv. 80-84), Shu'aib (vv. 85-93), and Moses (vv. 103f). Abraham is conspicuously missing.***

To some, S.7 may seem to be too elaborate, but an artful recitation of short disconnected passages attains a highly emotional pitch by the effect of contrasts and repetitions. The Koran is meant for expressive reading aloud more than for silent perusal.

7. THE HEIGHTS

Meccan, 206 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Alif lam mim sad.
2. [This] Scripture is revealed to you
to let you warn and remind the believers.
Let it not be heavy on your chest!

3. [O people!] Follow what your Lord has revealed to you
and do not seek any protectors besides Him.
But how little do you remember!

4* How many towns have We destroyed!
Our wrath came upon them at night or during the midday rest.
5. When Our wrath came upon them, they could only say:
"Truly, we have transgressed!"

6. We will question those who received [the Revelations],
and We will question those who transmitted them.
7. We will recount to them everything with Knowledge —
indeed, We are [never] absent.
8. Accurate shall be the Balance on that Day,
and successful will be those whose scales are heavy,
9. but those whose scales are light shall lose their souls
for being hostile to Our Signs.
10. We have settled you firmly on the earth
and We gave you the necessities of life,
but how small is your gratitude!
11. We have created you and gave you a shape.
Then We said to the Angels:
— Prostrate yourselves before Adam!
And they [all] prostrated themselves, except Iblis,

who refused to join those who prostrated themselves.
12* [God] said:
— Why did you not prostrate yourself as I have commanded?
[Iblis] said:
I'm better than he,
for You've created me of fire, and him of clay!"
13. [God] said:
— Get out of here!
This is not the place for you to be arrogant.
Out of here, measly one!
14. [Iblis] said:
"Grant me a reprieve till Resurrection Day!"
15. [God] said:
— So be among the reprieved!
16. [Iblis] said:
"Since You've led me into sin,
I'm going to ambush those who are on Your straight path.
17. I'll assail them from front and back,
from right and left!
You'll see that most of them are ungrateful."
18. [God said]:
— Get out from here and be scorned and exiled!
And if anyone of them follows you,
I will pack Hell up with all of you!
19. And you, Adam, dwell in the Garden with your spouse.
Eat anything you want, but do not approach this tree,
lest you become transgressors.
20. Then Satan whispered to them to let them see their shame
that was hitherto hidden from them, and he said to them:
"Your Lord has forbidden you this tree,
lest you became Angels and lived for ever."
21. And he swore to them:
"Truly, I'm your good adviser!"
22. Thus, by his deception he caused their fall.
When they tasted of the tree,
they noticed their shame, and to cover it up,
they stitched together some leaves from the Garden.
Their Lord called them:
— Have I not warned you
that this tree is not for you
and that, verily, Satan is your open foe?
23. They said:
"O our Lord! We've hurt our souls!
If You don't forgive us and don't grant us Your mercy,
we'll certainly be among the losers!"

24. [God] said:
— Get out of here, and live in enmity to one another!
Inhabit the earth and use it for some time.
25. And He said:
— On it you shall live, and on it you shall die;
and from it you shall be brought forth.

26* — O Children of Adam!
We have sent down to you some clothing
to cover your shame and make you attractive,
but the best garment for you is devotion to God!
This is one of God's Signs —
perhaps you will remember!
27. — O Children of Adam!
Do not let Satan seduce you
as he seduced your foreparents
whom he got out of Paradise
and divested of their clothes,
thus uncovering their shame.
He and his tribe are watching you
from where you cannot see them.
We made Satans patrons of the disbelievers!

28. When [the disbelievers] commit indecency, they say:
"We found out that this was our fathers' way,"
or "God has commanded us to do that."
Say:
"Verily, God doesn't prescribe indecency.
How can you say about God what you don't know?"
29* Say:
"My Lord commands justice.
Lift your faces [to Him] in each mosque
and call upon Him with sincere devotion.
You shall return [to Him]
the same as He has created you!"
30. He guided some people and let others go astray,
to make them take Satans as protectors instead of God,
while assuming that they were on the right path.

31* — O Children of Adam!
Don a beautiful apparel when you pray.
Eat and drink in moderation —
indeed, [God] does not love those given to excess.
32* Say:
"Who forbade the beautiful [things]
that God gives to His servants,
and the good things He gives them for food?"
Say:
"They are for those who in this life
have sincerely believed in the Day of Resurrection."
This is how We explain the Signs to knowledgeable people.
33. Say:
"My Lord has forbidden indecencies, open and secret,
and vice, and sedition against the truth,
and association to God without His sanction,
and saying of God that which you do not know."

34. Each community has its term. When this term is reached,
they will not be able to advance it
or to retard it even by one hour.

35* — O Children of Adam!
When Messengers of your kin come to you
to read you My Verses,
those who feared God and mended their ways
should neither fear nor grieve.
36. But those who rejected Our Verses and scorned them
shall dwell in the Fire and stay in it for ever.

37* Who does a greater wrong than those
who lie about God or reject His Signs?
Their fate has already been sealed
in the part of the Scripture that was given to them.
When Our Envoys come to recall their souls, saying:
"Where are those you've worshiped besides God?",
they will say:
"They've deserted us!"
In their disbelief, they shall witness against themselves.

38* [God] will say:
— Enter the Fire with the nations of Jinn and men
who died before you. As one community enters,
it will curse those who are like it,
until they all get inside.
The last ones shall say of the first ones:
"O our Lord!
These are the ones who led us astray,
so give them a double punishment by the Fire!"
[God] will say:
— A double one for each of them,
even though you do not know it.
39. And the first ones shall say to the last ones:
"You were no better than us,
so taste the punishment for all you've amassed!"

40* Verily, the Gates of Heaven shall not open
for those who disdained Our Signs and rejected them.
They shall not enter Paradise
until a camel passes through a needle's eye.
This is how We will treat the sinners!
41. Hellfire shall be their couch, and a shroud their cover.
Such is Our reward for those who do wrong!

42. As to those who believe and do good works,
We do not load their souls more than they can bear.
They shall dwell in Paradise and stay in it for ever!
43. We will cleanse their hearts of all grief.
Rivers shall flow at their feet, and they will say:
"Praised be God for guiding us —
indeed, without God's Guidance we wouldn't be here.
Our Lord's Messengers have brought us the Truth!"
And they will hear:
— This is the Paradise you have inherited for your deeds!

44. The dwellers of Paradise shall call
to the inmates of the Fire:
"We've found that our Lord's promise to us is true,
and you, have you found
that your Lord's promise to you is true?"
They shall say: "Yes!"
Then a herald shall proclaim among them:
"Let the curse of God be upon the sinners
45. for turning others away from God's path
and for seeking crookedness in it.
Indeed, they are of those who denied the Hereafter!"
46* And a curtain shall descend between them.

The men on the Heights shall know everyone by their marks,
and they shall call to the dwellers of Paradise:
"Peace upon you!"
They have not entered therein, but wished they had.
47. Turning their eyes to the inmates of the Fire,
they shall say:
"Our Lord! Don't lodge us together with the wrong-doers!"

48. The men on the Heights shall call
those they recognized by their marks, and say:
"Have you been helped by what you've amassed
and by what made you so proud?
49. Are you not the ones who swore
that God will never bless them with His mercy:
— Enter Paradise! You shall not fear nor grieve!"

50* The inmates of the Fire shall call
to the dwellers of Paradise:
"Throw us some water or something of the provision
God is providing you with!"
But they will say:
"God has forbidden both to the disbelievers
51. who took their religion for sport and amusement
and were seduced by the life of this world."
On that Day We will forget them, just as they forgot
the meeting on this Day of theirs and denied Our Signs!

52. We have sent down to them a Scripture based on Knowledge
and We explained it in detail.
It is a Guidance and a mercy for those who believed.
53* Or, maybe they are waiting for the Promise to be fulfilled?
The Day when the Promise is fulfilled,
those who have long forgotten about it will say:
"Indeed, our Lord's Messengers have brought us the Truth.
Don't we have any intercessors to intercede for us?
If we were returned [to life],
we would never behave like we behaved in the past!"
They have lost their souls,
and their inventions have disappeared!

54. Your Lord is God!
He has created the Heavens and the earth in six days;
then He established Himself on the Throne.
He covers the day with the veil of the night,
and they unfailingly succeed each other.
The sun, the moon, and the stars are obeying His Law.
Is He not the One, Who creates?
Is He not the One, Who rules?
Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds!

55. Call on your Lord humbly and in secret —
verily, He does not love the sinners!
56. And avoid corruption on the land
after it had been set in order,
but call on Him in fear and with hope.
Verily, God's mercy is near those who do good!

57. He is the One, Who sends the winds
that signal the approach of His mercy.
When they carry heavy clouds, We propel them to dry land
and pour rain down on it to bring forth fruits of all kinds.
Likewise We will revive the dead —
perhaps you will come to your senses!

58. Plants sprout on good soil by permission of their Lord,
but they are scarce on a bad one.
This is how We explain Our Signs to grateful people.

59. When We sent Noah to his people, he said:
"O my people, worship God!
You have no other god but Him.
I fear for you the punishment of the Great Day!"
60. The chieftains of his people said:
"We see that you're in deep error!"
61. [Noah] said:
"O my people! I'm not the one in error:
I'm a Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds,
62. I deliver to you the Messages of my Lord and I advise you.
Indeed, I know from God what you don't know.
63. Why are you surprised that a Reminder from your Lord
is brought to you by a man from your midst
to warn you that if you fear God,
perhaps you'll deserve His mercy."
64. But they rejected him.
We rescued him in the ark with some others
and We drowned those who denied Our Signs.
Verily, these people were blind!

65. To 'Ad [We sent] their brother Hood, who said:
"O my people, worship God!
You've no other god but Him, so why don't you fear Him?"

66. The disbelieving chieftains of his people said:
“We see that you’re out of your mind
and we think that you’re also a liar!”
67. He said:
“O my people! I’m not out of my mind,
I’m a Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds
68. and I’m delivering to you the Messages of my Lord —
I’m your faithful adviser.
69* Why are you so surprised that a man from your midst
brings to you the Reminder of your Lord to warn you?
Remember that [God] has made you
the heirs of the people of Noah,
and that He raised you above the nations.
If you remember God’s gifts to you,
perhaps you will succeed!”
70. They said:
“If you came to us to make us worship one God
and abandon the ones our fathers had worshiped,
then bring your threat upon us
if you’re telling the truth!”

71. He said:
“Your Lord’s retribution and wrath
have already fallen upon you.
So why do you argue with me about some names
that you and your fathers have invented
without God’s permission?
So wait, and I’ll wait with you!”
72. By Our mercy We rescued him and his companions.
And those who denied Our Signs and refused to believe,
We destroyed them to the last one!

73* To Thamood [We sent] their brother Salih, who said:
“O my people, worship God!
You have no other god but Him.
A clear Proof from your Lord has come to you:
this she-camel, consecrated to God.
She is a Sign for you.
Let her graze in the land of God.
Don’t hurt her, lest a painful punishment befalls you.
74. Remember that [God] made you the successors of ’Ad,
and settled you in [this] land
where you build castles in the valleys
and excavate dwellings in the mountains.
So remember God’s gifts
and don’t spread corruption in the land!”
75. The haughty chieftains of his people
said to the believers they considered as weaklings:
“Are you sure that Salih is a Messenger of his Lord?”
They said:
“Yes, and we believe in what has been sent down with him.”
76. Then the haughty ones said:
“We reject what you believe in!”

77. And in defiance to their Lord's command,
they hamstrung the she-camel and said:
"O Salih! Bring your threat upon us
if you're really one of the Messengers!"
78. An earthquake disposed of them unawares, and in the morning
they were lying prostrate in their dwellings.
79. [Salih] turned away from them and said:
"O my people! I've delivered to you the Message of my Lord,
and I gave you good advice; but you dislike the advisers!"

80. And Lot? He said to his people:
"How can you commit shameful acts
unheard of in the Worlds?
81. Lusting after men instead of women!...
Yes, you're a people without restraint!"

82. But his people had just one response:
"Expel them from your town —
indeed, these people want to stay pure!"
83. We rescued [Lot] and his family,
except his wife, who stayed behind.
84. We pelted the others with a hail [of stones].
Look at the fate of the transgressors!

85. And to Madyan [We sent] their brother Shu'aib, who said:
"O my people, worship God!
You've no other God, except Him.
A clear Proof has come to you from your Lord.
Give a full measure, weigh justly,
don't appropriate what isn't yours,
and don't spread corruption in the land
after it has been set right.
It's best for you to believe!
86. Don't sit by the roads, threatening the believers,
and don't seduce them from the way of God
in an effort at making it crooked.
Remember how few you were, and how He multiplied you!
Consider the fate of the corrupt!
87. If some of you believe in what I've been sent with,
and some others don't believe,
then wait patiently until God rules between us,
for He is the best of the Judges!"

88. The haughty chieftains of the people said:
"O Shu'aib!
Return to our way; otherwise, we'll expel you from town
together with those who believe like you."
He said:
"And what if we hate it?
89. We would lie against God if we returned to your way
after God has rescued us from it.
We won't return to it, unless God, our Lord, wills it.
Our Lord's Knowledge extends to all things,

and in God we trust.
O our Lord! Rule between us and our people by the Truth,
for you're the best of the Judges!"
90. The disbelieving chieftains of his people said:
"If you follow Shu'aib, you'll be the losers!"
91. An earthquake caught them unawares,
and at daybreak they were lying prostrate in their houses.
92. Wiped out were all those who rejected Shu'aib,
as if they had never flourished there!
Yes, the losers were those who rejected Shu'aib!

93. He turned away from them and said:
"O my people!
I've delivered to you the Messages of my Lord
and I've given you some advice.
Why should I grieve over the people who disbelieve?"

94. We have never sent a Prophet to a town
without first testing its people by suffering or adversity,
hoping they would humble themselves.
95. Then We kept replacing their suffering by prosperity
until they recovered and began to say:
"Our fathers had also experienced
turns of adversity and prosperity."
And at that We took them suddenly, unawares!

96. If the town-dwellers believed and feared God,
We would have certainly extended to them
the blessings of Heaven and earth.
But they rejected [Our Message],
and We seized them for what they deserved!
97. Do the townspeople feel secure,
knowing that Our wrath can overtake them
at night when they are asleep?
98. Do they feel secure,
knowing that Our wrath can overtake them
during the day while they are having fun?
99. Are they secure from God's planning?
Only the people who are doomed
think themselves secure from God's planning!

100. Have We not warned those who inherited the land
from its [former] possessors that if We willed,
We could punish them for their sins
and seal their hearts to prevent them from hearing?
101. This is what happened to the towns
We are telling you about.
Their Messengers came to them with the Proofs,
but they refused to believe in what they had denied before.
This is how God seals the hearts of the disbelievers!
102. We found that most of them were not keeping the Covenant.
And We found that most of them were corrupt.

103. Later on We sent Moses with Our Signs
to Pharaoh and his chieftains, but they rejected them.
Consider the fate of those who did wrong!
104. Moses said: "O Pharaoh!
I'm a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds.

105. My duty is to speak only the Truth about God.
I brought to you the Proofs of your Lord —
let the Children of Israel leave with me!"
106. [Pharaoh] said:
"If you brought a Sign, show it
if you're telling the truth."
107. [Moses] cast his staff, and it turned into a snake;
108* he pulled his hand out, and everyone saw it was white.
109. The chieftains of Pharaoh's people said:
"Surely, he's a clever magician
110. who wants to expel you from your lands.
What is your command?"
111. And they [also] said:
"Let him and his brother wait
while you're sending recruiters to the cities
112. to round up to you the most skilled magicians."

113. When the magicians came to Pharaoh, they said:
"We expect to get a reward if we win!"
114. [Pharaoh] said:
"Yes, I'll make you [my] retainers."
115. They said:
"O Moses! Will you cast, or shall we cast first?"
116. [Moses] said:
"Let you cast!"
While casting, they put a spell on the eyes of the people
and frightened them by showing a great magic feat.
117. We inspired Moses:
— Cast your staff!
And lo and behold, it swallowed their fakes.
118. Thus, Truth has won and their deeds have been exposed!
119. Instead of winning, they were humiliated.
120. The magicians prostrated themselves
121. and said:
"We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,
122. the Lord of Moses and Aaron."
123. Pharaoh said:
"How could you believe in Him without my permission?
Surely it's a plot you devised
to exile the people from the city!
But soon you shall know!
124. Off each of you I'll cut a hand on one side
and a foot on the other; then I'll crucify you all!"
125. They said:
"Verily, We're turning to our Lord.
126. You retaliate against us only because
we believed in the Signs of Our Lord when they reached us.

O our Lord! Give us endurance
and let us die as Muslims!"

127. The chieftains of Pharaoh's people said:
"Shall you let Moses and his people
spread corruption in the land
after they have repudiated you and your gods?"
[Pharaoh] said:
"Let's kill their sons and spare their women —
are they not in our power?"
128. Moses said to his people:
"Seek God's help and arm yourselves with patience.
The land belongs to God,
and He'll give it in inheritance
to those of His servants He pleases —
such is the outcome for the God-fearing!
129. [The people] said:
"We've been persecuted before and after you came to us."
[Moses] said:
"Your Lord can destroy your enemy
and make you inherit the earth.
He's watching over your deeds."

130* To make them come to their senses,
We struck the people of Pharaoh
with years [of drought] and scarcity of fruit;
131* but as soon as things improved for them, they said:
"We've deserved that!"
When evil befell them, they blamed it
on the bad omens of Moses and his followers.
But in God's sight bad omens were in themselves,
albeit most of them did not understand [it].
132. They said [to Moses]:
"No matter what Sign you show to bewitch us with,
we won't believe you!"

133* We sent upon them as evident Signs
a flood, locusts, lice, frogs, and blood,
but they remained as arrogant as before —
indeed, they were sinful people!
134. Each time retribution fell upon them, they said:
"O Moses!
Call upon your Lord on our behalf, as He bequeathed you!
If you lifted the retribution from us, we'd believe you
and we'd let the Children of Israel go with you."
135. But each time We lifted the retribution from them
to let them fulfill [their promise], they broke it.

136. In the end, We punished them:
We drowned them in the sea
for denying Our Signs instead of heeding them.

137. We let the people who were reputedly weak
inherit the East and West of the earth We had blessed.
The good promise of your Lord to the Children of Israel
came true thanks to their fortitude.
We destroyed everything built by Pharaoh and his people,
everything they had made.

138. We moved the Children of Israel across the sea.
There they met some people who worshiped idols,
and they said:
"O Moses! Make us a god in the image of their gods."
He said:
"Truly you are ignorant people!
139*What they're holding to will soon be in shambles,
and useless will be all their deeds!"
140. And he said:
"Why should I seek for you a god other than God
if He is the One, Who put you above the Worlds?"
141. Indeed, We rescued you from the people of Pharaoh
who afflicted you with a most cruel punishment
by killing your sons and sparing your women.
Mighty was this test on the part of your Lord!

142*We promised Moses thirty nights,
then We added ten more,
to let him spend forty nights with his Lord.
Moses said to his brother:
"O Aaron! Be my deputy before my people.
Act right, and don't tread the path of the corrupt."

143*When Moses came to the place We have designated,
his Lord addressed him.
[Moses] said:
"O my Lord! Reveal Yourself to me to let me see You."
[God] said:
— You cannot see Me!
Look at [this] mountain: if nothing happens to it,
then you will be able to see Me.
But when his Lord appeared before the mountain in His glory,
it crumbled to dust, and Moses passed out.
When he recovered, he said:
"Glory to You! I'm turning to You in repentance —
I'm the first among the believers!"

144. [God] said:
— O Moses! I have chosen you among all the people
for My Messages and My Words.
Take what I am giving to you and be grateful.
145*We wrote for him all the matters on Tables,
admonishing and explaining everything:
— Hold fast onto this
and order your people to hold onto the best —
soon I will show you the abode of the corrupt!

146.I will turn away from My Signs
those who unlawfully aggrandize themselves in the land,
so that even if they saw all the Signs,
they would not believe in them,
and if they saw the right path, they would not follow it.
But if they see the path to corruption,
they will rush upon it —
indeed, they denied Our Signs and made fun of them!
147.Fruitless are the deeds of those who denied Our Signs
and the meeting in the Hereafter!
Shall their reward be unlike their own deeds?

148.While Moses was away,
his people fashioned their ornaments
into the shape of a lowing calf.
Did they imagine that it would talk to them
or guide them on the right path?
But they embraced it and joined the wrong-doers.
149*When they were slapped on their hands,
they saw their error and said:
"If our Lord does not absolve us and doesn't forgive,
then surely, we'll be the losers!"

150*Moses returned to his people angry and grieved.
He said:
"Evil were your deeds while I was away.
Do you really want to hasten the judgment of your Lord?"
He cast the Tablets down and,
seizing his brother by the head, dragged him to his side.
[Aaron] said:
"O my mother's son! The truth is
that the people subdued me and almost killed me.
Don't humiliate me before the enemies
and don't assimilate me to the sinful people!"
151. [Moses] said: "O my Lord!
Forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy,
for You're the Most Compassionate of all the compassionate."

152.Verily, the wrath of their Lord and shame in this life
shall fall on those who took to the calf —
this is how We reward those who spin lies!
153.But for those who do wrong and then repent and believe,
verily, your Lord is forgiving and merciful.
154.When his anger subsided, Moses picked up the Tablets
on which were inscribed the Guidance
and the mercy for the God-fearing.

155.For Our appointed meeting
Moses chose seventy men of his people.
When an earthquake jolted them, he said:
"O my Lord! Had You so willed,
You would've destroyed them together with me long ago.
Shall You destroy us [now]

because of the actions of some fools among us?
Apparently it's a trial on Your part
to send some people astray as You will,
and to guide the others as You will.
So forgive us and have mercy upon us.
You're our Protector and the best of forgivers!
156*Prescribe goodness for us in this world and the Next One —
truly, we are turning to You!"
[God] said:
— I strike with My punishment anyone I want,
but My mercy extends to everything.
I dispense it to those who fear God,
pay the zakat, believe in Our Signs,
157*and follow the Messenger, the Prophet ummi,
who is mentioned in their Torah and Evangel.
He exhorts them to the lawful and restrains them from evil.
He allows them wholesome [food] and forbids what is foul.
He relieves them of their burdens and chains.
They believe in him, honor him, assist him,
and follow the Light that was sent down with him.
They are the ones who will prosper!
158. Say:
"O my people! For all of you I'm a Messenger of God,
the Sovereign of the Realm of Heavens and earth.
There is no god, but Him!
He is the One, Who gives life and death.
So, believe in God and his Messenger, the Prophet ummi,
who believes in God and His Words.
Follow him — perhaps you will receive Guidance."

159. Among the people of Moses some
were guided by the Truth and judged by it.

160. We divided them into twelve tribes.
When the people asked Moses to drink, We inspired him:
— Strike the rock with your staff!
Thereupon, twelve springs gushed forth,
and everyone knew from which one to drink.
We shielded them with clouds,
and We sent upon them manna and quails:
— Eat the good things We are providing you with!
They did not wrong Us, they have wronged themselves!

161*They were told:
— Dwell in this town and eat there anything you please.
When you enter a gate,
[say] hittaton and prostrate yourselves.
Then We will forgive your sins,
and increase [the share] of the righteous.
162. But the wrong-doers among them
replaced this word by another one.
Then, for all their sins,
We sent upon them a calamity from Heaven.

163*Ask them about the town by the sea
where the Sabbath was not observed.
On the day of Sabbath fish came up to them,
but on the days other than the Sabbath,
they did not come to them.
This is how We tried them for their impiety!

164. Some of them used to say [to the Warners]:
"Why are you warning the people
that God is going to destroy anyway
or afflict with a strong punishment?"
[The Warners] said:
"We're fulfilling our duty to your Lord
and we hope that they will fear God."
165. But they forgot what they were warned about,
and We rescued only those who abstained from evil.
We struck the wrong-doers
with a painful punishment for their sins.
166. When they continued to disregard the prohibitions,
We said to them:
— Be despicable apes!
167. And your Lord announced to them that before Resurrection Day
He will unleash upon them those
who will submit them to a violent retribution.
Verily, your Lord is quick in punishing,
but, verily, He is also forgiving and merciful!

168. We divided them in the land into communities.
Some were virtuous, and others were sinful.
We tested them with goodness and evil,
hoping that they would return [to Us].
169*Their successors inherited the Scripture,
but chose the vanities of this life, saying:
"We'll be forgiven [for everything]."
But if these vanities returned,
they would cling to them [again].
Did they not pledge in the Covenant
of their Scripture which they had studied
that they will speak only the Truth about God?
But the best for the God-fearing
is the abode of the Hereafter.
Will you not understand?

170. And what about those who hold onto the Scripture
and stand up in prayer?
Surely, We will not allow
the reward of the righteous be wasted.

171. When We shook the mountain over them
and it [hang] like a canopy,
they thought that it will crash upon them, and [We said]:
— Hold fast to [the Scripture] We have brought to you,
and remember everything it says —
perhaps you will fear God!

172*When your Lord raised their posterity
from the loins of the Sons of Adam,
He made them testify about themselves:
— Am I not your Lord?
They said:
"Yes, we do testify [to that]."
Otherwise, on Resurrection Day you would have to say:
"Yes, we've been mindless about that,"
173. or "Our fathers had been Associators before us,
and we are their descendants.
Will You destroy us for the deeds of the mindless?"
174. This is how We make the Signs clear —
perhaps they will return [to God]!

175*Tell them about the man to whom We sent Our Signs,
and he rejected them —
Satan tagged along with him, and he lost the way.
176. Had We so willed, We would have inspired him,
but he took to the earth and followed his lusts.
He can be compared to a dog:
attack it — it lolls its tongue;
leave it alone — it lolls its tongue.
This analogy is for those who reject Our Signs.
Give them [this] example — perhaps they will reflect.

177. A bad example are the people who hurt their souls
by rejecting Our Signs.
178. Anyone guided by God is on the right path,
and anyone He sends astray suffers a loss.

179. We have created for Hellfire many Jinn and men.
They have hearts, but cannot understand;
they have eyes, but cannot see;
they have ears, but cannot hear;
they are like cattle, but farther astray.
How mindless they are!

180*To God belong the most beautiful Names.
So call Him accordingly
and avoid those who desecrate His Names —
soon they shall pay for their deeds!

181. There is a community among those We have created
which guides by the Truth and dispenses justice by it.
182. But those who have rejected Our Signs,
We will lead them to [punishment] step by step, unawares.
183. I will give them a reprieve, but firm is My decision!
184. Did they not realize that their companion is not crazy,
that he is just their lucid Warner.
185. Do they not see when they look
at the Kingdom of Heavens and earth
and everything created by God

that their term is coming to an end?
In what Message will they be able to believe after that?
186. Those whom God sends astray
are deprived of Guidance and wander blindly in sin.

187*They ask you:
"When is that Hour coming?"
Say:
"Only my Lord knows it! He alone can disclose its time
that will be burdensome in the Heavens and earth,
and will catch you by surprise!"
They ask you [about the Hour], as if you knew it.
Say:
"Only God knows it, but most people do not know!"

188. Say: "It's not in my power to benefit
or to hurt myself, except as God wills.
Had I known the Unseen, I would've multiplied goodness,
and no evil would've touched me.
But I'm only a Warner and a carrier of good news
for the people who believe."

189. He is the One, Who has created you as a single soul.
From it He made for you a spouse
to let you find comfort in her.
After they get together,
she bears a light burden and carries it about.
When it becomes heavy, they both call to God, their Lord:
"Give us a righteous [son], and we'll be grateful!"
190. But as soon as He gives them a righteous [son],
they attribute a share of this gift to His partners.
Exalted is God above what they associate!

191. How can they associate with Him those
who do not create, but have been created,
192. who cannot help either them or themselves.
193. They will not follow you if you call them to Guidance:
it makes no difference for you
if you call onto them or keep silent.
194. Verily, those you call to besides God
are servants like yourselves; call onto them
and let them answer you if you are telling the truth!
195. Do they have legs to walk and hands to grasp with,
and eyes to see, and ears to hear?
Say:
"Then call upon your associate-gods
and plot relentlessly against me!
196. Verily, my Protector is God.
He has sent down the Scripture,
and He assists the upright.
197. But those you call to besides Him
will help neither you nor themselves."

198. You call them to Guidance, but they do not hear you.
You think they are looking at you, but they are blind.
199. Uphold forgiveness, enjoin righteousness,
and avoid the ignorant.
200. And if temptation from Satan affects you,
seek refuge with God — He is hearing and all-knowing!
201. Verily, when Satan tempts the God-fearing,
they remember [God] and recover their sight.
202*But their brothers are sparing no efforts
to lead them farther astray.

203. If you do not bring them a Verse [of the Koran], they say:
"Why didn't you contrive one?"
Say:
"I'm following only what my Lord inspires me.
It's an enlightenment from your Lord,
it's a Guidance and a mercy for the people who believe."

204. Listen in silence when the Koran is recited —
perhaps you will receive mercy.
205. Remember your Lord within yourself mornings and evenings,
without raising your voice, humbly and fearfully,
and do not be one of the heedless!
206. Verily, those who are by your Lord
do not disdain serving Him.
They glorify Him and prostrate themselves before Him!

V. 1: Like S.44, this sura begins with letters — here they are **alif lam mim sad**. People with a passion for decoding letters and numbers try to discover in "**a l m s**" meaningful combinations like "alpha and omega" and mystical messages to the delight of "numerologists," as each letter has a numerical value. However, these letters are probably editorial marks that helped to arrange the suras in a certain order. Thus, **ha mim** starts all the suras from 7.40 to S.47; **alif lam ra** — from S.10 to S.15; **alif lam mim** — suras 2,3,7,29,32; **ta sin mim** — SS.26,28. The position of other suras with unique combinations of letters or without letters might have been questionable until the whole Koran was published. Some authorities believe that the letters are in the mythic Syriatic language spoken before the Flood.

V. 4: God destroyed some towns to punish them for their sins.

V. 12: "Created me from fire." Is Iblis one of the Jinn or a fallen Angel?

V. 26: "Make you attractive," lit. "cover you with feathers".

V. 29: "In each mosque" or during each prayer. The command to pray in the direction of Mecca was issued later.

V. 31: The Meccans still supply the pilgrims with white cloth to wear in the sacred land. The first part of this sura might belong to a late period when pilgrimage became a Muslim rite.

V. 32: "The beautiful [things]" or "gifts." The Koran calls for moderation, but does not approve of asceticism.

V. 35: "To read My Verses" is more logical and direct than "to recite My Signs" or "to convey My Message" (S.36:33f).

V. 37: "In the part of the Scripture that was given them." Here, the Scripture is the Revelation consisting of the Torah, the Evangel and the Koran. The "Envoys" are the Angels of death.

V. 38: "Those who preceded it," lit. "their sisters".

V. 40: The camel passing through the eye of a needle: comp. Matt. 19:24; Luke 18:25; Mark 10:25.

V. 46: The Heights separate Paradise from Hell. The fate of the men on the Heights is still undecided — they are in a kind of Purgatory. They recognize the righteous by the glow on their faces.

In the West evil is perceived black and virtue white, but this convention is often reversed in the East. Black is the color of a quiet night, a refreshing shade, the splendid eyes of a gazelle or a beautiful woman, the blessed stone of the Ka'ba. White is the color of dead bodies and dried bones, the blinding sun, the burning sand, leprosy, and the flames of Hell.

The root of the Arabic word for "heights" **(al-a'raf)** is the same as in "knowledge" **('rf)**, so that "the heights" also suggest "high knowledge."

V. 50: The dwellers of Paradise and Hell will see one another. The righteous might pity the sinners and ask God to forgive them. Perhaps, He will. According to the Hadith, God wrote over His Throne the words: "My Mercy Supersedes my Wrath!"

V. 53: "The Promise is fulfilled" or the transmission of the Scripture is completed.

V. 69: One gets the impression that Hood and the other Arab Prophets lived after Noah and before Abraham and Moses.

"Perhaps you will succeed," "you will prosper," or still more precisely, you will flourish," as the Arabic word **taflahun** is stronger than "you will be successful." The root of taflahun is **flh** — to blossom, to burst forth (hence **fallah** — peasant). The call to the prayer is usually translated with neutral words: "Get up to prayer, get up to success." In reality it is sounded on a much higher note: Come to life for prayer, come to life for flourishing" **(haiyu 'ala-salah, haiyu 'alal falah)**.

V. 73: In the late suras the word "Sign" **(aya)** is occasionally replaced by "proof" **(bayina).** All the meanings of "aya" are combined by some translators in one word — "communication" (MHS).

V. 108: Moses's hand looked white not because of leprosy but because of divine glow. Muslims believe that Moses was a Black man.

V. 130: "Years [of drought]" or "years of hardship."

V. 131: It was believed that birds carried good or bad omens. V. 133: The flood is not mentioned in the Bible among the plagues that afflicted the Egyptians.

V. 139: This verse has different interpretations, depending on the identity of the pagans mentioned in v. 138.

V. 142: "Forty days" for the meeting with God on Mt. Sinai.

V. 143: Moses did not see God, but only spoke to Him.

V. 145: The Biblical ten commandments are not spelled out because they have been replaced by the Koranic laws that vigorously support them.

V. 149: "When they were slapped on their hands," i.e., when they came to their senses.

V. 150: Contrary to the Bible, Moses didn't break the Tables of the Law: that would have been sacrilegious. They remain intact further down in v.154.

V. 156: Zakat, the tithe (S.93:10), was usually set at 2.5% of the net worth, as estimated by the taxpayer himself.

V. 157: The Torah and the Evangel **(injil)** are mentioned by name only in the late suras. For Muslims, the Torah has the same meaning as for the Jews, and Injil is a primary account of Jesus's life, close to the source of the synoptic Gospels.

Vv. 157-8: It is better to leave the word **ummi** untranslated because of its many meanings: illiterate, popular, national, ignorant, simple. The divine origin of the Koran is supported by the illiteracy of the Prophet who could have been unlettered in the sense that he was not touched by mundane knowledge, even though he had literate assistants: his wives 'Aisha and Hafza, for example. Some of the Prophet's enemies pretended that he was just repeating the words of a human teacher, but then the Koran would not have been in perfect Arabic (C.16:103) The followers of Jesus also believed that Jesus was illiterate (John 7:13, Acts 4:13).

In principle all translations of the Koran are unwarranted unless the translator himself is **ummi** and reflects the Koran as a mirror. Still, irreproducible sounds and subtle meanings will be always lost in translation. To the opinion that total spiritual immersion in the Koran is possible only in the language in which God expressed His Will is opposed the opinion of many scholars who believe that man ought to pray in the language of the heart that is directly accessible to God, and not necessarily in Arabic, and that a person can be a true Muslim without studying the original text of the Holy Book.

V. 161: The meaning of **hittaton** is unclear. It could be: "in humility we come."

V. 163: The town is, apparently, a port on the Red Sea. The fish used to surface up to town folks on the Sabbath, as if fish knew that catching them was forbidden on that day. This situation was a temptation for the Jews. According to Islam, all living creatures have some knowledge and conscience, but people usually do not notice it.

V. 169: The "Scripture" — the Pentateuch (the Torah).

V. 172: "From their loins" or "from their backs."

V. 175: The dodger might be the Biblical Balaam.

V. 180: About the Names of God, cf. S.85:14.

V. 187: "When is the Hour due" — in the original: "when the anchor is cast" or "when they sail into the harbor."

V. 202: The "brothers [in evil]" are probably the Qarinas (S. 50:23f) or else, the Shaitans.

SURA 28 STORIES. ***This sura deals with the life of Moses from his birth to his confrontation with Pharaoh. The account of his marriage is patterned on the Biblical story of Laban and Jacob. The story of Moses ends with the episode of the wealthy Korah of the Bible. The castigation of the Associators is stepped up: it will become a recurrent theme in the Koran.***

28. STORIES

Meccan, 88 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Ta sin mim.
2. Here are some Verses from the lucid Scripture.

3. We will recite to you from the story of Moses and Pharaoh
which is true for believers.
4* Verily, Pharaoh had elevated himself in the land,
divided the people into groups, and persecuted one of them
by killing their sons and sparing their women.
Truly, He was among the corrupt!

5* We wished to be gracious to those
who were persecuted in that land
and make them imams and inheritors,
6. improve their position in the land,
and show Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts
what they were so afraid of.
7. So We inspired the mother of Moses:
— Breast-feed him, and when you will fear for his safety,
cast him into the river.
Do not worry or grieve —
We will return him to you and make him a Messenger.
8* Thus the family of Pharaoh retrieved the one
who will become their enemy and cause them much grief.
Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts were all transgressors.

9. Pharaoh's wife said:
"Spare him: he'll be a joy for my eyes and yours.
Perhaps he'll be useful to us
or we'll adopt him as our son."
Little did they know!
10* In the morning the heart of Moses's mother was empty,
and she was about to reveal [her secret],
but We strengthened her heart to let her stay a believer.

11. She said to [Moses's] sister:
"Watch over him!"
She began to watch over him from aside,
but little did they know!

12* At first We forbade him a wet nurse
until [his sister] said:
"Let me show you a household
that will bring him up for you
and will become sincerely attached to him!"

13. Thus We returned him to his mother
to comfort her eyes, stop her grief,
and let her know that God's promise is true,
albeit the majority do not know [it].

14. When [Moses] grew up and reached maturity,
We gave him Wisdom and Knowledge.
This is how We reward those who do good!

15* [One day] he entered the city, unnoticed by its inhabitants.
There he came upon two fighting men.

One was of his creed and the other of that of his enemies.
His fellow in creed called him to help against his enemy,
and Moses slayed him by a blow with his fist.
He said:
"This is the work of Satan!
Verily, he's the enemy who leads everyone astray!"
16. He [also] said:
"O my Lord! Truly, I've wronged my soul! Forgive me!"
And [God] forgave him —
verily, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful!
17. He [also] said:
"O my Lord! Since You've bestowed Your favor upon me,
I'll never support the corrupt!"

18. In the morning, as he was [walking] in the city,
cautiously looking around, he was called [again]
by the man who had sought his help the day before.
Moses said to him:
"You're truly a troublemaker!"
19. When he had almost subdued their common enemy,
the latter said:
"O Moses! Do you want to murder me,
as you murdered someone else yesterday?
Apparently you want to be an oppressor in the land,
and not a peacemaker!"

20. At this, a man came running
from the farthest end of the city and said:
"O Moses! The chieftains are considering killing you.
Go away from here — such is my good advice!"
21. He continued to walk, fearfully looking around, and said:
"O my Lord! Deliver me from the people who do wrong!"
22* And turning his face to Madyan, he said:
"I hope that my Lord will show me the straight path!"

23. Arriving at the watering place in Madyan,
he came upon a group of people watering [their cattle].
There he met two women backing [their flock].
He said:
"What is the matter with you?"
They said:
"We can't water [our flock] until the shepherds are gone;
and our father is a very old man."
24* After watering [their flock],
[Moses] turned aside to the shade and said:
"O my Lord! I need all the favor You can bestow upon me!"
25. One of the two [women] modestly walked toward him and said:
"My father invites you to repay you
for watering [our flock]!"
When he arrived, [Moses] told him what happened,
and he said:
"Don't be afraid, you're safe here from the unjust people!"
26. One of the two [women] said:

"O my father, hire him! Who would be a better hired hand
than a strong and trustworthy [man]!"
27. [The father] said to him:
"I'd wed you to one of my two daughters,
if you work for me for eight years,
unless you want to make it ten — you decide.
I don't want to place any hardship upon you,
and, God willing, you'll find me upright."
28. [Moses] said:
"So let it be so between us.
Neither of the terms will burden me.
God is witness to your words."

29* At the end of the term,
Moses and his kin went their way.
When he saw a fire on the side of a mountain,
he said to his kin:
"Wait! I see a fire!
From it I might bring you some news
or a burning brand to keep you warm."

30. When he approached [the fire],
a voice was heard from a tree in the hallowed grove
on the right side of the valley:
— O Moses! Verily, I am God, the Lord of the Worlds.
31. Cast your staff down!
When he saw that it crawled like a snake,
he backed up and ran away. [And he heard]:
— O Moses! Come back, do not be afraid, you are safe!
32* Slip your hand into your bosom,
and it shall come out white without harm.
Now press your wing to your side and ward off [your] fear.
These are two Proofs from your Lord
for Pharaoh and his notables.
Verily, these people are corrupt!
33. [Moses] said:
"O my Lord! I committed a murder and I fear for my life.
34. My brother Aaron is more eloquent than I,
so send him along with me as assistant and guarantor;
I'm really afraid of being accused of falsehood."
35. [God] said:
— We will strengthen your arm with your brother's help
and give you both such power
that they will not molest you.
With Our Signs you shall certainly win —
you and those who will follow you!

36. When Moses came to them with Our clear Signs, they said:
"This's just some faked magic!
We haven't heard anything like it from our forefathers."
37. Moses said:
"My Lord knows best who comes forth with His Guidance
and who is assigned to the best abode.

Verily, the wrong-doers shall never prosper!"
38. Pharaoh said:
"O Chiefs! I don't know of any god for you, except myself.
O Haman! Fire me an oven for [firing] clay
and build me a tower to let me ascend to the God of Moses,
albeit I'm sure he's lying!"

39. Falsely imagining themselves the greatest in the land,
[Pharaoh] and his army presumed they will not return to Us.
40. We took hold of him and his army and cast them into the sea.
Look at the end of the wrong-doers!
41. We made them leaders calling to the Fire —
on Resurrection Day no one shall help them!
42. We sent a curse after them in this world,
and on Resurrection Day they shall be among the despised!

43. After We destroyed the former generations,
We gave Moses the Scripture — an insight,
a Guidance, and a mercy for the people —
perhaps they will remember!

44. — [O Muhammad!] You were not on the western side
[of the valley] when We gave the Commandments to Moses,
and you did no witness [it].

45. Ever since We have raised [new] generations
that lived for a long time.
You have not dwelt among the people of Madyan
and have not recited Our Verses to them.
Yet, We kept sending [them] Messengers!
46. You were not on the side of the mountain
when We addressed [Moses].
And now, by the mercy of your Lord,
you shall be warning a people
to whom no Warner had ever come before —
perhaps they will remember!
47. Otherwise, if they are hit by distress for the deeds
they have wrought with their hands, they would say:
"O our Lord! Why haven't You sent us a Messenger?
Then we would've followed Your Verses
and joined the believers!"

48* Now that Our Truth has come to them, they say:
"Why hasn't he received what had been sent down to Moses?"
But are they not the ones who rejected
what had been sent down to Moses in the past? They say:
"[The Torah and the Koran]
are two bits of magic that reinforce each other."
And they [also] say:
"We do reject it all!"
49* Say:
"Then, produce a Scripture from God
that guides better than either of these two,

and I'll follow it if you're telling the truth!"
50. But if they do not answer you,
then know that they follow only their passions.
Who is further astray than the one who follows his passions
and is deprived of the Guidance of God?
Verily, God does not guide those who do wrong!
51. Now that We brought [Our] Word to them,
perhaps, they will remember [the Guidance]!
52* Those to whom We had sent the Scripture before, trust it.
53. When it is recited to them, they say:

"We believe in it because it's the Truth from our Lord.
Indeed, we had been Muslims even before it!"
54* They shall receive a double reward:
for being patient, for repelling evil by virtue,
and for spending out of Our provisions.
55. When they hear vain talk, they turn away and say:
"Our affairs are ours, and your affairs are yours!
Peace upon you!
We don't go the way of the ignorant!"

56. — [O Muhammad!] You cannot guide everyone you like,
but God guides everyone He wills —
He knows best those who live by Guidance.
57* [The disbelievers] say:
"Had we followed you in Guidance,
we would have been expelled from our land."
Have We not settled them in a sacred place
where all kinds of fruit
are brought as sustenance from Us?
But most of them do not know [it]!

58. How many towns We have destroyed
that cherished their way of living!
Almost all their dwellings are deserted by now,
and We became [their] inheritors!
59. Your Lord is not such as to destroy a town
before sending a Messenger to its people
in order to recite Our Verses to them.
We destroy a town only when its people are doing wrong.
60. All the things you receive
are mere conveniences and adornments of this life,
but that which is with God is better and more lasting!
Why do you not understand?

61. Can you compare those to whom We made a generous promise
that shall be certainly fulfilled
to those to whom We gave the provisions of this life,
but who will be brought [as sinners] on Resurrection Day.
62* On that Day [God] will summon them and say:
— Where are the ones you claimed to be My 'partners'?
63* The ones whose guilt has already been established shall say:
"O our Lord! Here are the ones we've led astray.

We've led them astray because we have been misled.
We repudiate them in Your Presence —
indeed, it wasn't us that they worshiped!"
64. And [the Associators] shall be told:
"Call your 'partners' to the rescue!"
They shall call them, but they will not respond,
and they shall see the punishment before them.
It would have been better for them to accept Guidance!

65. On that Day [God] will call them and say:
— How did you answer the Messengers?
66. The events shall be obscured for them on that Day,
and they shall not be able to consult one another.
67* But whoever repented, believed and acted uprightly,
will hope to be among the successful ones.
68. Your Lord creates and chooses as He wills,
but they will have no choice.
Glory to God! Exalted He is above those they associate!

69. Your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts
and what they reveal.
70. He is God, and there is no god but Him!
Praise be to Him in this and the Last [life]!
He will be the Judge, and to Him is your return.

71. Say:
"Think, if God prolonged your night till Resurrection Day,
which god besides God would return you the light?
Why don't you listen?"
72* Say:
"Think, if God prolonged your day till Resurrection Day,
which god besides God would return to you the night to rest?
Why can't you see?"
73. By His mercy He has made for you the night and the day
to rest and to seek His favors —
perhaps you will be grateful?

74. The Day will come when He will call them and say:
— Where are My 'partners' of your invention?
75. We shall produce a witness from each community and say:
— Come up with your proofs!
Then they shall realize that all Truth is with God,
and their inventions will disappear.

76* Verily, Korah belonged to the people of Moses,
but he oppressed them.
We gave him such fortune
that a band of strong men
were not enough to carry its keys.
His people said to him:
"Don't exult so much,
verily, God doesn't like those who exult!

77. Better look for an abode in the Hereafter,
using what you've received from God.
Don't forget about your share in this world
and be as kind as God is kind to you.
And don't spread corruption in the land,
for God doesn't love the corrupt!"
78. [Korah] said:
"All this has been given to me for my knowledge."
Did he not know that God had destroyed
many generations before him that were stronger in power
and richer in possessions?
The wrong-doers will not be brought to account [right away]!

79* Behold, he went out to his people in all his pomp.
Those who were seduced by the life of this world said:
"If we only had as much as was given to Korah!
He's truly a man of great luck!"
80. But those gifted with Knowledge said:
"Woe to you!
For those who believed and acted uprightly,
God's reward will be much better.
Only those who endure shall get it!"

81. We made the earth swallow him together with his dwelling.
There was no one at his side to defend him against God,
and he was not able to defend himself.
82. In the morning those who had coveted his position
the day before, were saying:
"Yes! God increases or decreases provisions
to those of His servants He pleases.
If God wasn't beneficent to us,
He would've let [the earth] swallow us as well.
No! The disbelievers shall never prosper!"

83. We shall give the abode of the Hereafter
to those who do not make much of themselves
and do not [spread] evil on earth —
such will be the outcome for the God-fearing!
84. The one who does good works shall receive in exchange
something better than the evil-doer.
The reward of the wrong-doers will be their own deeds!

85* — [O Muhammad!] Verily, He, Who trusted you with the Koran
will lead you back to the Place of Return.
Say:
"My Lord knows best who came with the Guidance
and who's in deep error."

86. You have not expected that the Scripture
would be dealt to you, except as a mercy from your Lord,
so do not support the disbelievers!
87. Do not let them turn you away from the Verses of God
after they have been sent down to you.
So call [people] to your Lord and do not be an Associator!

88. Do not call on any god, except God.
There is no god, but Him!
Everything shall perish, only His Self shall remain.
He will be the Judge, and to Him you will return!

Vv. 1,2: They are identical to the first two verses of S.26. Both S.26 and S.28 start with the story of Moses.

V. 4: Pharaoh was trying to weaken the Hebrews.

V. 5: The **imam** is a religious leader. In Iran, he is the ruler of a district or a province, often with a prophetic gift.

V. 8: In the Book of Esther, the enemy of the Jews was a minister of Ahasuerus, **Haman**. Here, he is the Vizier of Pharaoh.

V. 10: Until now, no distinction was made between the heart and the chest, and "heart" was the word of choice. Now, when in this sura three different words are used for the center of faith and knowledge, it makes sense to point out these differences. The Knowledge that God is One, or Islam itself, is in the chest **(sadr)** (v.69); faith is in the heart proper **(qalb)** (v.10); the knowledge of God's attributes, based on faith, is in the depth of the heart **(fu'ad)**(also v.10).

V. 12: God forbade him to use a wet nurse because all the available nurses were not Jewish.

V. 15: "Unnoticed" or: "their people lacking vigilance." As a member Pharaoh's family, Moses was not supposed to walk in the city alone.

V. 22f: A similar story in the Bible is told about Laban and Jacob (Gen.29).

V. 24: "Turning aside to the shade" — to avoid creating the impression that Moses worshiped the sun. To separate themselves from the cult of the sun, Muslims forbade praying at sunrise and sunset, and replaced the solar calendar by the lunar calendar.

V. 29: "On the side of the mountain" or "on the side of [Mt.] **Al-Toor**."

V. 32: "Press your wing" — if a man wearing a mantle extends his arm holding a staff, he creates the impression of a wing.

V. 48: This verse is addressed to the Jews of that time.

V. 49: The mentioned Scriptures are the Torah and the Koran.

V. 50: The Koran is easy to understand by members of occidental cultures not only because they share many of their thoughts with Muslims, but also because most of the stories and episodes recounted in it are familiar to the foreigners.

People must control their passions if they don't want to be punished. An often repeated Warning to the sinners is: "How many towns We have destroyed..." (v. 58). Sin exists in the world because, like everything else, sin is part of God's Creation. God is compassionate and forgiving, and sin allows Him to forgive. Some sins are due to bad judgment. They are ***errors*** that are even useful inasmuch they help man to correct his behavior and find his proper place in society. Man's desires are also legitimate because it is God Himself Who inspired them to man. However, it is incumbent upon man to rule over his desires and prevent them from escalating to sinful passions.

V. 52: If the Jews had accepted the Koran, there would have been hope for reconciliation between the monotheistic religions.

V. 54: Twice — first here on earth, and then in Heaven.

V. 57: The sacred place is Mecca. For the Kuraish it was a source of income; for Islam it is a symbol of spiritual life.

Vv. 62-64f; 74-75; 87-88: The "partners" of the Associators are not only their idols but also the passions that distract man from God: an excessive pursuit of wealth, art, sports, science.

V. 63: "The ones whose guilt is established": the sinners and the objects of their cult that will be judged as well. In the light of then Koran idols are not only material representations of gods, but also all those who are falsely endowed by superstitious people with extraordinary qualities. The Koran does not accept the cult of the "saints," marabouts, miracle workers, hermits, and healers. While defending themselves on Judgment Day, these "saints" will reject their worshipers.

V. 67: "Will hope..." God's promise is not absolute: it is predicated upon man's behavior till the last day of his life.

Vv. 72-73: The sun and the moon, the night and the day are Signs of God's might and grace. "He appointed the moon for sea-sons; the sun knows his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night..." (Ps. 104: 19-20).

V. 76: Korah or Qarun was a fabulously rich Levite who led the opposition against Moses and Aaron (Num.16).

V. 79: "In all of his pomp," lit., "in his adornments."

V. 85: "The Place of Return" is Mecca or Paradise.

V. 88: "Only His Self shall remain," i.e., the first of His manifestations according to the doctrine of Five Presences. The first Presence — the One God — is eternal. The other presences are not perfect as they are potentially or totally transient. The term "eternal" has not the same meaning in Arabic and in the other languages. In Arabic it means perpetuity or even "a very long time".

SURA 71 NOAH. ***S.71 is entirely dedicated to Noah as S.12 is to Joseph. However, S.71 is wanting in expository unity and smoothness in transitions. Noah's mission is described in terms that could easily apply to any other Prophet. That reminds us that all the Biblical characters in the Koran are legendary and symbolic. Their stories may be unconvincing to the rational mind, but they create a powerful spiritual mood.***

71. N O A H

Meccan, 28 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* We sent Noah to his people:
— Warn your people
before they are overtaken by a painful punishment!

2. Noah said:
"O my people! I'm your lucid Warner.
3* Serve God, fear Him, and obey me.
4. Then He will forgive your sins
and reprieve you for a definite term.
Indeed, when God sets a time,
it's impossible to postpone it, if you [only] knew!"

5. And he said:
"O my Lord! I've been calling to my people night and day,
6. but my call only increased their alienation.
7. Each time I told them that You might forgive them,
they stuck their fingers in their ears
and wrapped themselves in garments.
They were stubborn and full of haughty arrogance.
8. I called to them aloud,
9. I talked to them in gatherings and in secret.
10. I kept telling them: 'Beg your Lord's forgiveness —
indeed, He's all-forgiving.
11. He'll make abundant rain fall upon you from the sky.
12. He'll multiply your wealth and your sons.
He'll give you gardens, He'll give you rivers.
13. So what's the matter with you
that you don't trust the greatness of God?
14* He has created you in stages.
15. Don't you see
that God has created the sky in seven layers,
16. and set up in it the moon as a light
and the sun as a lamp?

17. God has made you grow from the earth like plants.
18. Later He'll return you into it
and resurrect you in a [great] resurrection.
19. God has spread the earth for you like a rug
20* to let you travel on its wide roads.'"

21. Noah said:
"O my Lord! They've disobeyed me and followed those
whose wealth and children only increase their loss.
22. They plotted a huge plot
23* saying:
'Don't abandon your gods.
Don't abandon Wadd, Suawa', Yaguth, Ya'uk, and Nasr.'
24* They've seduced many [people] in this way,
so don't increase the wrong-doers in anything, but error."

25. They were drowned for their sins and led into the Fire —
nobody could have helped them, except God!
26* Noah said:
"O my Lord! Don't spare
a single disbelieving dweller on earth.
27. Indeed, if You spare them, they'll seduce Your servants
and breed only wicked disbelievers.
28* O my Lord! Forgive me and my parents,
and every believer who enters my house,
and all the believing men and women.
And don't increase the sinners in anything, but perdition!"

V. 1: S.71 might have been originally a part of a longer sura because it lacks an introduction and deals only with Noah.

V. 3: A Muslim ***surrenders*** to God (S.72:4). He believes in God's Plan founded on reason and beauty, and wishes to be part of this Plan. He ***fears*** God because much is mysterious and menacing for him in His Way. V. 3 lists the duties of man in a nutshell.

V. 14: A ***non sequitur*** referring to embryonic development.

V. 20: "Wide roads" or "mountain passes."

V. 23: **Wadd, Suawa', Yaguth, Ya'uk,** and **Nasr** are the names of five pre-Islamic idols; they were also the symbols of beauty, man-hood, and other human qualities.

V. 24: Continuity requires that it be followed by v.27.

V. 26: "A single disbelieving dweller" or "a single dwelling of the disbelievers."

V. 28: Noah prays only for the believers and the penitents because it makes no sense to pray for the sinners (cf. v.24).

SURA 12 JOSEPH.

S.12 is devoted to one Biblical character, Joseph, son of Jacob. His story is told in chronological order, but in the typical Koranic style, with the omission of most of the personal names. In contrast to the other Biblical stories, S.12 is not condensed from the Bible, but expanded by the introduction of new details. Some Muslims like the Kharajites mistakenly wanted to exclude it from the Koran as a love story without a clear moral value. Others see in it a deep meaning with universal value.

12. J O S E P H

Meccan, 111 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam ra.
Here are some Verses from the lucid Scripture
2. that We have sent down as an Arabic Koran —
perhaps you will understand!

3*. — [O Muhammad!] As We reveal this Koran to you,
We will tell you some of the best stories
that you did not know before.

4. Once Joseph said to his father:
"O my father!
I dreamt of eleven stars, the sun, and the moon,
and I saw that they prostrated themselves before me."
5. [His father] said:
"O my dear son!
Don't tell your brothers about your vision,
lest they conspire against you —
verily, Satan is man's open enemy!
6. Know that your Lord will choose you,
teach you the interpretation of events,
and extend His mercy to you and to the posterity of Jacob,
as He had previously extended it
to your forefathers Abraham and Isaac.
Verily, your Lord is knowing and wise!"

7. Joseph and his brothers were Signs for the probing minds.

8. [His brothers] said:
“It’s obvious that our father loves Joseph
and his [younger] brother more than us,
although together we are a mighty force.
Verily, our father is in manifest error.”

9. [One of them said:]
“Kill Joseph or expel him to a [faraway] land,
then our father will turn his attention to you
and you’ll become righteous people again!”
10. Another one said:
“Don’t kill Joseph, but if you want to do something,
better throw him to the bottom of a well —
perhaps some passing caravan will pick him up!”

11. [The brothers] said:
“O our father! Why don’t you trust us with Joseph?
Indeed, we sincerely wish him well.
12. Send him with us tomorrow: let him have fun and play,
and we’ll take care of him.”
13. [Their father] said:
“Surely I’ll feel sad if you take him away with you.
I’m afraid that a wolf will devour him
when you divert your attention from him.”
14. [The brothers] said:
“But there are many of us;
we’ll rather be hurt ourselves
than let a wolf devour him!”

15. They went away with him,
conspiring to throw him to the bottom of a well.
We inspired [Joseph]:
— You will surely remind them of their action
when they will not know who you are!
16. At nightfall they came back to their father in tears,
17. They said:
“O our father! When we went off to race, we left Joseph
with our belongings, and a wolf devoured him.
You won’t believe us, but we’re telling the truth!”
18* They had smeared his shirt with some one else’s blood.
[The father] said:
“Yes, you’ve made up a good excuse for yourselves,
but patience is a virtue,
and only [God] will help me to unravel your assertions!”

19. A caravan came by,
and one of their men was sent to the well.
He lowered his bucket and said:
“Good luck! Here’s a youth!”
They hid him among their goods,
but God was well aware of what they had done.
20* They sold him for a low price, just for a few dirhams,
thinking that he was not worth much more.

21. A man from Egypt bought him and said to his wife:
"Shelter him honorably — he might be useful to us,
or we might adopt him."
Thus We settled Joseph in [that] land
to teach him the interpretation of events.
God is in full control of His Designs,
but most people do not know [it].
22. When [Joseph] reached manhood,
We gave him Wisdom and Knowledge —
this is Our reward to the righteous!

23* The mistress of the house where he lived
tried to subvert his will.
She locked the doors and said:
"Come here!"
He said:
"God forbid! Isn't [your husband] my master
who has kindly sheltered me?
Verily, the wrong-doers won't succeed!"
24. But she desired him; and he would have desired her,
had he not known the Commands of his Lord.
Thus We turned evil and depravation away from him —
verily, he was one of Our faithful servants.
25. They raced to the door, and she tore his shirt on his back.
At the door they ran into her husband. She said:
"Is there a harsher retribution
than prison or a painful ordeal
for someone who has plotted evil against your wife?"
26. [Joseph] said:
"She's the one who tried to seduce me!"
A witness from her household said:
"If his shirt is torn from the front,
she's telling the truth and he's lying,
27. but if his shirt is torn from behind,
she's lying and he's telling the truth."
28. [The husband] saw the shirt torn from behind and said:
"Such are the deceits of women!
Verily, mighty are your deceits!
29. O Joseph! Forget it!
And you, ask forgiveness for your sin —
indeed, you are the guilty one!"

30* The women in the city began talking:
"The wife of a noble man tries to seduce
a young slave against his will.
He inspired her with love,
and apparently she has really gone astray!"

31* Having heard their gossip, she sent for them
and invited them to a banquet.
She gave a knife to each of them and called [Joseph]:
"Come before them!"

When they saw him, they became so excited
that they cut their hands. They said:
"God help us! He isn't a mortal but a noble Angel!"
32. She said:
"This's the one you're blaming me for.
I tried to seduce him, but he resisted.
If he doesn't yield to my demand,
he'll surely be thrown into prison,
and be among the vilest!"
33. [Joseph] said:
"O my Lord! I prefer prison to what I'm urged to do.
If You don't avert their intrigues against me,
I might become like them and join the ignorant!"
34. His Lord answered him
and saved him from their ill doings.
Verily, He is the Hearer, the Knowing!
35* Although the evidence was clear,
they decided to send him to prison for some time.

36. Two youths were sent to prison with him.
One of them said:
"I dreamt that I was pressing wine."
The other one said:
"I dreamt that I was carrying bread on my head,
and birds were pecking at it.
[O Joseph!] Interpret this for us —
indeed, we see that you're one of those who do good."
37. [Joseph] said:
"I'll interpret it before they bring you your food —
indeed, it's part of what my Lord has taught me.
I've left the creed of the people
who rejected God and denied the Hereafter,
38. and I've joined the creed of my forefathers
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
With God's grace bestowed upon us and mankind,
we should not associate anything with God.
But most people are ungrateful!
39. O my fellow prisoners!
Who's better: several lords differing among themselves
or God, the One, the Victorious?
40. Indeed, you aren't worshiping Him, but only some names
that you and your fathers have invented,
and for which God hasn't sent down any authority.
But only God will be the Judge,
and He commands you to worship Him alone.
This is the right faith,
but most people don't know!
41. O my fellow prisoners!
One of you shall be pouring wine for his master.
The other one will be crucified,
and birds will peck at his head.
Such will be the outcome of the matter
you're asking me about."

42. [Joseph] said to the one he thought would be saved:
"Remind your master about me!"
But Satan made him forget to tell his master,
and [Joseph] stayed in prison for a few more years.

43* [One day] the King said:
"I've seen in my dream seven fat cows
that are eaten by seven lean ones,
and ears of corn — seven green and the others dry.
O, you Chiefs! Explain my dream to me
if you know how to interpret dreams!"
44. [The Chiefs] said:
"This dream is a very confusing vision,
and we aren't skilled at interpreting dreams!"

45* But one of the two men, the one who was released,
remembered [Joseph], though much time had passed,
[and said]:
"Let me deal with that,
and I'll interpret them for you."
46. [He went to the prison and said]:
"O Joseph! O man of Truth!
Interpret to us [the dream] about seven fat cows
that are eaten by seven leans ones,
and ears of corn — seven green and the others dry.
If I return to the people, perhaps they'll understand!"
47. [Joseph] said: "Sow for seven years as usual,
but save your harvest in the ear,
except a little to eat from.
48. There shall follow seven hard [years]
that will consume all you've saved,
except a little that you've put aside.
49* Finally, there shall come a rainy year,
and people shall resume pressing [wine and oil]."

50. The King said: "Bring him to me!"
When the messenger arrived, Joseph said:
"Return to your master and ask him:
'What happened to the women who cut their hands?'
Verily, my Lord is well aware of their plots!"

51* [The King] said [to the women]:
"What was on your mind when you tried to seduce Joseph?"
They said:
"God forbid! We haven't heard anything evil about him!"
And the wife of the notable said:
"Truth is now revealed!
It was I who tried to seduce him,
but he proved to be one of the truthful!"
52. This is to let [my husband] know
that I've never betrayed him, even in secret —
indeed, God doesn't support the plots of the wrong-doers!
53* I'm not trying to justify myself.

Verily, the unfettered soul is inclined to evil,
unless my Lord dispenses His mercy.
Verily, my Lord is forgiving and merciful!"

54. The King said:
"Bring him to me, and I'll attach him to my person."
After talking to him, he said:
"From now on you'll stand before us,
reliable and trustworthy!"
55. [Joseph] said:
"Assign to me the stores of the land —
I'll be their knowledgeable guardian."
56. Thus We gave Joseph power in the land
to rule over it as he liked.
We bestow Our mercy upon any one We please,
and We do not waste the reward of those who do good!
57. Verily, the best reward in the Hereafter
is for those who believed and feared God.

58. Joseph's brothers arrived and were brought in his presence.
He recognized them, but they did not recognize him.
59. After supplying them with provisions, he said:
"Bring me your [younger] brother by your father.
Don't you see that I'm giving you a full measure
and that I'm the best in hospitality?
60* But if you don't bring him to me,
there won't be any measure from me [anymore],
then don't even approach me!"
61. [His brothers] said:
"We'll get him from his father,
yes, we'll do that!"

62. [Joseph] said to his servants:
"Return their goods to their packs,
but so that they wouldn't know what's in them
until they return home.
Then, perhaps they will come back."

63. When they returned to their father, they said:
"O our father! They won't give us another measure
unless you send our brother with us.
We promise to take care of him!"
64. He said:
"How can I trust you with him
after I've once trusted you with his brother?
God is the best Protector,
He is the Most Compassionate of the compassionate!"

65. When they opened their packs, they saw that their goods
had been returned to them. They said:
"O our father! What else could we wish for!
We got our goods back,
thus we'll feed our family, keep our brother safe,

and have an additional camel-load in store,
be it a small amount."
66. [Their father] said:
"I won't send him with you
before you swear by God that you'll bring him back,
unless something happens to you."
After they had sworn their oath, he said:
"God is witness to our words."
67* Then he said:
"O my sons! Don't enter [a city] by one gate,
but enter by different ones.
I can't help you against God:
truly, it's God alone Who decides,
and Him alone I trust. Let those who trust, trust Him!"

68* They entered [the city] as their father had commanded.
It could not have helped them against God,
but it was the wish of Jacob's soul, and he fulfilled it.
Indeed, he was full of Knowledge from Our teaching,
but most people did not know [it].

69. When they appeared before Joseph, he invited
his [younger] brother to stay with him, and said:
"I'm your brother! Don't feel sorry for their deeds."
70. He supplied them with provisions
and placed a cup in his [younger] brother's pack.
Then a crier proclaimed:
"O, men of the caravan!
There are thieves among you!"
71. They turned around and said:
"What are you missing?"
72. They were told:
"The King's cup is missing!
A camel-load for the one who finds it —
we vouch for it!"
73. [The brothers] said:
"By God! You know that we didn't come here
to make mischief in the land, and we aren't thieves!"
74. [The Egyptians] said:
"How should we punish you if you're lying?"
75* [The brothers] said:
"Enslave the one in whose pack [the cup] is found.
This is how we punish those who do wrong!"
76* [Joseph] started with their packs
and pulled [the cup] from the [younger] brother's pack.
Such was Our plan for Joseph.
He would not have applied the law of the King
had it not been God's will.
Thus We raise in ranks anyone We will.
For each one who knows, someone knows better.

77* [The Egyptians] said:
"If he is a thief, he should have a brother

who was a thief before him."
But Joseph kept this to himself
and did not confide [to his brothers]. He thought:
"You're in a hot spot,
but God knows best what is on your mind!"
78. [The brothers] said:
"O Chief! His father is a very old man,
so better take one of us instead of him —
indeed, we see that you're of those who do good."
79. [Joseph] said:
"God forbid that we hold anyone,
except the one with whom we found our property,
or we would be unjust!"

80* In despair, they stepped aside to confer.
The eldest said:
"Don't you remember that your father
made you swear by God,
and that in the past
you'd been unfair to Joseph?
Therefore, I'll not leave [this] land
until my father gave me permission,
or God commanded me — indeed, He is the best of all judges!
81. Return to your father and tell [him]:
'O our father! Your son has been caught stealing.
We vouch only for what we know
and we aren't keeping any secrets.
82. Ask in the town in which we have stayed
and the caravan with whom we came back
if we're telling the truth!'"
83. [The father] said:
"No, you've made up all of this, but patience is best.
God might bring me back all [my sons],
for He is the All-knowing, the Wise."
84. Turning away from them, he said:
"Oh how much do I grieve over Joseph!"
His eyes became white from grief,
and he was unable to control his sorrow.
85. [The brothers] said:
"By God! You won't stop remembering Joseph
till you're senile and pass away."
86. [The father] said:
"Of my distress and my grief I complain [only] to God —
I know from God what you don't know.
87. O my sons! Go to search for Joseph and his brother,
and don't despair of God's mercy.
Verily, nobody despairs of God's mercy
except people without faith!"

88. When [the brothers] appeared before [Joseph], they said:
"O Chief! An affliction came upon us and our family.
We brought a few inexpensive goods with us,
yet give us a full measure for charity's sake.

Verily, God rewards those who give to charity!"
89. [Joseph] said:
"Do you remember how you treated Joseph and his brother
when you were astray?"
90. [The brothers] said:
"Is it possible that you're Joseph?"
He said:
"Yes, I'm Joseph, and this's my brother.
God has been gracious to us.
Truly, God won't allow that the reward of a God-fearing
and patient man be lost if he has acted right."
91. They said:
"By God! God has elevated you above us,
and, verily, we've sinned!"

92. [Joseph] said:
"Today there won't be any reproaches to you,
and God will forgive you —
He's the Most Compassionate of the compassionate!
93. Take my shirt and cast it upon my father's face,
and he'll recover his sight.
Then, return to me with all your family."

94. When the caravan departed [from Egypt], their father said:
"I feel that Joseph is nearby.
Don't think that I've lost my mind!"
95. He was told:
"By God! You surely keep to your old delusions!"
96. When the messenger came with the good news
and cast [the shirt] upon his face,
he regained his sight and said:
"Didn't I tell you that I know from God
what you don't know?"
97. [The brothers] said:
"O our father! Pray for the forgiveness of our sins
— yes, we're guilty."
98. [The father] said:
"I'll ask my Lord to forgive you.
Verily, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful!"

99. When they all appeared before Joseph,
he lodged his parents in his house and said:
"Enter Egypt in peace if such is God's will."
100. He raised his parents upon the throne,
and they prostrated themselves before him. [Joseph] said:
"O my father! My old dream is fulfilled!
My Lord let it come true.
He has been good to me when He released me from prison
and brought you here from the desert
after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers.
Verily, my Lord is generous to any one He wills.
Indeed, He is the All-Knowing, the Wise!
101. O my Lord! You've given me power

and You've taught me how to interpret events.
O Creator of the Heavens and the Earth!
You're my Protector in this world and the Hereafter.
Let me die in submission to You
and make me join the upright!"

102*Such is one of the events of the past
that We are inspiring you with — you were not there
when evil was planned and intrigues were sprung.

103. But no matter how you wished it,
most people would not believe,
104. albeit you do not ask them to be rewarded for that.
This is only a Reminder to the Worlds!
105. How many Signs there are in Heavens and earth
by which they pass by and from which they turn away!
106. Most of them believe in God,
but only after they associate [other gods] with Him.
107. But does this make them safe from the punishment of God
that shall fall upon them like a pall,
or from the Hour [of Judgment]
that shall come upon them suddenly, taking them unawares!
108. Say:
"This is my way!
I see what is evident, and I'm calling you to God
together with those who follow me.
Thanks God, I'm not an Associator!"

109. And before your time We have been sending men
from amongst the townspeople We had inspired.
Did they not travel in the land,
did they not see the fate of their predecessors?
The abode in the Hereafter is best for the God-fearing.
How come you do not understand?

110. When the Messengers lose hope after suffering rejection,
Our help comes to them, and We save those We will.
But Our punishment will not spare the guilty people!

111* There is a lesson in these stories for the right-minded.
It is not a fiction, but a confirmation of past events
with a description of all things.
It is a Guidance and a mercy for the people who believe!

V. 3: The Prophet's audience did not know Joseph's story.

V. 18: The father is already suspicious of his sons.

V. 20: It seems that the brothers were watching from afar. When the wayfarers pulled Joseph out of the well, the brothers approached to take money for him.

A believer does not seek continuity in a story. The Prophet is not a historian, but a reporter of ideas and a preacher. The lack of punctuation gives unity and compactness to the Arabic text, but creates some vagueness that encourages meditation and a mystic outlook.

Whereas Christianity is built on theology that spurns logical analysis, Islam is built on intuition and meditation about the beauty of the world and the wisdom of God's Word. Joseph and his brothers were Signs for ***the probing minds*** (v.7). A **dirham** (the Greek drahma) is the 20th part of a **dinar**.

V. 23: According to tradition, the woman was **Zulaikha**. She "tried to subvert his will" or "tried to seduce him."

Vv. 30-34: The story about women swooning at the sight of Joseph is not in the Bible. Thomas Mann borrowed this episode from the Koran and used it in his epic work "Joseph in Egypt" (1936). He thought that the legend of Joseph had a universal teaching value for mankind. Apparently a particularly long sura was devoted to Joseph for this same reason. Muslim mystics valued this theme, and the Persian poet Nur-eddin Djami wrote in the 15th century a poem entitled "Joseph and Zulaikha".

V. 31: "A banquet" or "a place to recline." The beauty of Joseph is proverbial in the Muslim world. It is said that all men in Paradise will be as handsome as **Yusuf** (Joseph).

V. 35: "Proofs" or "Signs" [of his innocence], or simply "Signs." Joseph was safer in prison than in his master's house.

V. 43: Here Pharaoh is called "the King."

V. 45: This man remembered Joseph and wanted to learn his interpretation of the dreams, and then pass it on as his own.

V. 49: Egypt relies upon the flood of the Nile and not upon rain for irrigation.

V. 51: It isn't clear who is the speaker in this verse: the King or Joseph's master.

V. 53: "The unfettered soul" — man's low desires (S.75:2).

V. 60: "Provision" or load, measure.

V. 67: Entering through different gates is an advice to avoid envy and suspicion on the part of the local population.

V. 68: Although everything will be according to God's will, Jacob, being righteous, must still teach piety to the others in the hope that they will mend their ways.

V. 75: "Will lose his freedom," lit., "will be His own punishment."

V. 76: Joseph leads the investigation himself.

V. 77: The brother who stole first is not identified.

V. 80: The righteous elder brother remains unnamed.

V. 102: "The past," lit., "the Unseen."

V. 111: The Koran never says that Islam is for the Arabs only. Islam should unite all people from Adam to the last newborn in the world. The Muslims respect all religions; although Truth is absolute, it is recognized that it can be attained in different ways. Therefore, it is not necessary to destroy temples and monuments if they are not detrimental to Islam. They are valuable in the sight of God if He allowed their building and preservation for ages. Muslim extremists are wrong in their intolerance, but they caused less damage than the Christian zealots who destroyed civilizations and rival Christian beliefs they deemed heretical.

SURA 18 THE CAVE. ***This sura is remarkable for its four stories inspired by Biblical and Ancient legends:***

1. The Story of the Seven Sleepers. Seven young believers hide from their persecutors in a cave where they stay in suspended animation for 309 years (vv. 9-

26). The story shows that people have a personal perception of time and events, and that it is useless to contradict them in these matters.

2. The Story of the Two Neighbors. The richer of the two is so self-reliant that he forgets to put his fate in the hands of God. He is punished by the loss of his property (vv. 32-44).

3. The Story of Moses and the Stranger. It teaches that one must never judge people by appearances alone, and that all events have an underlying meaning that cannot be understood without divine inspiration. The Stranger is not named, but as this story merges with the next one, he must be Dhul-Qarnein (vv. 60-82).

4. The Story of Dhul-Qarnein. This mysterious character whose name means "the one with two horns" is usually identified with Alexander the Great, who traveled in the world and built a rampart in Central Asia against the evil forces of Gog and Magog. Alexander is in communication with God because no human achievement is conceivable without God's intervention (vv. 83-98).

18. THE CAVE

Meccan, 110 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Praise be to God, Who has sent down to His servant
a Scripture that is not twisted,
2. but straightforward,
to warn about His mighty retribution
and to announce a generous reward
to the believers who do good —
3. [a dwelling] where they will abide for ever.
4* And also to caution those who say:
"God has begotten a son."
5. Terrible are these words coming out of their mouths!
Neither they nor their fathers know anything about it,
and everything they say is a plain lie!
6. Had you followed them,
you might have killed yourself out of grief,
knowing that they will never believe in this Revelation!

7. We made everything on earth to embellish it
and to test which of them are the best in deeds.

8. But verily, We will reduce everything on it
to waste and dust!

9* Do you not think that the youths of the cave and ar-raqim
were one of Our most amazing Signs?
10. Once, after hiding in the cave, the young men said:
"O our Lord! Grant us Your mercy
and settle our matter in the right way!"
11. There in the cave, We sealed their ears for many years.
12* Then We brought them back to life to find out
which of the two sides would better estimate
how long they had stayed [inside].
13. We are telling you their true story.
These youths believed in their Lord,

so We increased [Our] Guidance to them
14. and fortified their hearts.

Once, they stood up and said:
"Our Lord is the Lord of Heavens and earth.
We'll never call to any one besides Him —
that would be blasphemy.
15. Our people had taken gods besides Him,
but why don't they bring
convincing proofs in their favor?
Is there a worse offender
than the one who invents lies about God?"
16. — [O young men!] Withdraw from them
and from those they worship besides God,
and escape to a cave.
Your Lord will grant you of His mercy
and will facilitate your affair.

17* You could have observed that when the sun rose,
it leaned to the right of the cave,
and when it set, it moved to the left,
while they remained in the middle.
This was one of God's Signs.
Whoever is guided by God is on the right path,
but for whomever He leads astray,
you shall not find a protector
to show him the right way!
18. You could have thought they were awake,
but they were asleep.
We kept turning them right and left,
and their dog stretched its forepaws at the entrance.
Had you suddenly come upon them,
you would have surely fled from them in terror!

19* Then We brought them back to life
to let them question one another.
One of them said:
"How long we've been [here]?"
They said:
"We've been here one day or a part of a day."
And they all said:
"Our Lord knows best how long we've been here.
Send one of you to the city with your money.
Let him find the purest food
and bring it to you to satisfy your hunger.
And let him be careful and not tell anyone about you.
20. Indeed, if they find you, they'll stone you
or force you to return to their cult.
Then you'll never be successful!"

21* We are telling their story
to make it known that God's promise is true,
and that the Hour [of Judgment] will certainly come.

As they were arguing about their affair, [someone] said:
"Build a house over them —
indeed, their Lord knows them best!"
But those who prevailed in this matter said:
"We'd rather build a mosque over them!"
22* Soon [some people] will say that they were three,
and that the dog was the fourth.
[Others] will say, guessing the unknown,
that they were five, and the dog was the sixth.
[Still others] will say that they were seven,
and the dog was the eighth.
Say, [O Muhammed!]:
"My Lord knows best how many they were,
but only a few [people] know it."
Do not argue about them, unless the facts are clear,
and do not question anyone about them!

23. And never say about anything:
"I promise, I'll do it tomorrow,"
24* without adding: "If God wills."
Each time you forget [it],
remember your Lord and say:
"I hope that my Lord will bring me
still closer to the right path!"

25* They stayed in the cave three hundred and nine years.
26. Say:
"God knows best how long they've stayed [there] —
indeed, He holds the secrets of Heavens and earth.
And how He sees! And how He hears!
They've no protector besides Him!
And He doesn't associate anyone to His decisions!"
27. So recite what has been revealed to you
of the Scripture of your Lord —
indeed, no one can change His Words.
And you will find a shelter only by Him!
28. Hold onto those who, seeking His Face,
pray to their Lord mornings and evenings,
and do not avert your eyes from them,
lest the frills of this life tempt you.
Do not obey any one, whose heart We allow
to neglect remembering Us, who pursues his passions,
and is extravagant in his affairs.
29. Say:
"Truth emanates from your Lord."
Whoever wants it, let him believe,
and whoever does not want it, let him deny.
We have prepared a Fire for the wrong-doers
which will take them under its pall!
They will cry out for help, but they shall be given water
like molten metal that will scorch their faces.
What a dreadful drink, what an awful refuge!
30. And what about those who believed and did right?

Verily, We shall not suffer that the reward of those
who believed and did right goes to waste.
31* For them there are the Gardens of Eden
with rivers flowing underneath.
They shall be adorned therein with golden bracelets
and dressed in green silk and brocade.
They shall recline therein on raised lounges —
what a beautiful reward, what a splendid couch!

32. — [O Muhammed!] Give them the example of two men.
To one of them We gave two vineyards.
We surrounded them with palm-trees
and placed corn fields in between.
33. We caused a river to flow in the middle,
to let each vineyard produce a plentiful crop.
34. [One of the men] harvested the fruit
and argued with his companion, saying:
"I'm richer than you in money and mightier in kinsmen!"
35. He went into his garden with thoughts harmful to his soul
and said:
"I'm sure this is for ever,
36. and I think that the Hour will never come.
And if I were returned to my Lord,
I'd certainly receive something better in exchange!"
37. Continuing to argue, his companion said:
"Do you deny the One, Who has created you from dust
and then from a drop, and gave you a human figure?
38. For me, He is God, my Lord,
and I'll never associate anyone with my Lord!
39. Why haven't you said, upon entering your garden:
'If God wills! There's no power other than God's!'
As you see, I'm poorer than you in wealth and children,
40. but I hope that my Lord
would give me something better than your garden,
which He can reduce to a heap of dust
by sending upon it a thunderbolt from the sky
41. or by letting water run underground,
so that you won't recover it."
42. When his fruit was wiped out,
he was wringing his hands —
indeed, he had spent a lot [on his garden],
and now it was utterly destroyed! He said:
"Woe to me! I wish I had not associated to my Lord!"
43. But no one is able to protect him like God,
and he is not able to protect himself.
44. Indeed, protection is only from the True God —
He is the best at rewarding and the best at achieving!

45. — [O Muhammad!] Give them
the example of life in this world.
It is like the water We send down from the sky.
It mixes with the soil and feeds the plants
that the wind soon scatters as dry stubble.
God has power over everything!

46. Wealth and sons are just frills of this life,
but good deeds endure for ever!
They are the best in the sight of your Lord,
the best in rewards and the best in expectations.

47. The Day when We sweep away the mountains,
you will see how the earth will become a flat plain.
We will gather them together, all to the last one,
48. and they will appear before your Lord in ranks:
— Here you came to Us as We had first created you!
And you thought that We will not set up a meeting for you!
49. The Book shall be opened,
and imagine the horror of the wrong-doers
at what is recorded in it! They shall say:
"Oh!, woe to us! What kind of a Book it is —
it doesn't conceal anything, small or great,
and takes everything into account!"
And they shall be faced with all their deeds.
Your Lord will not be unjust to anyone!

50. We said to the Angels:
— Prostrate yourselves before Adam!
They prostrated themselves,
except one of the Jinn called Iblis,
who disobeyed his Lord's Command.
— Would you take him and his offspring
as protectors in My place? Are they not your enemies?
What an evil turn for the wrong-doers!
51. I have not called them to witness the creation
of Heavens and earth and their own creation.
How could I have taken helpers
from among those who lead [people] astray!

52* On the Day when He says:
— Call those you claimed to be My partners!,
they shall call to them, but they will not respond:
We shall separate them by a screen!
53. The wrong-doers will realize at the sight of the Fire
that they will fall into it and will find no way to escape.

54. In this Koran We give to men all kinds of examples,
but man is contentious in everything!
55. When Guidance came to the people,
nothing prevented them from believing
and asking their Lord to forgive them.
Then they would have avoided the fate of the Ancients
and would not have met the punishment head on.

56. We are sending Messengers
only as bearers of good news and as warners,
but the disbelievers enter into vain disputes
in order to weaken the Truth.

They take My Signs and Warnings for a joke.
57. Who is more sinful than the one
who, being reminded of the Signs of his Lord,
turns away from them and forgets [the deeds]
that his hands have brought forth!
Verily, We have veiled their hearts
and sealed their ears, so that they would not understand!
If you exhorted them to Guidance,
still they would not walk on the straight path!

58* Your Lord is the Forgiving, the Full of Mercy!
Had He called them to account for their deeds,
He would have certainly hastened their punishment.
But their term is fixed, they cannot avoid it!
59. We used to destroy their towns,
but only after they had fallen into sin,
and after We set a time for their destruction.

60* Once Moses said to his young servant:
"Even if it takes me many years, I will not give up
until I reach the junction of the two seas!"
61* But when they reached the junction,
they forgot about their fish,
which found its way right into the sea.

62. On the road he said to his young servant:
"Bring our morning meal,
for we're exhausted by the journey."
63. [The youth] said:
"Didn't you notice that when we took shelter by the rock,
I forgot about the fish!
None other than Satan distracted me from it,
and it slithered into the sea in a marvelous way."
64. [Moses] said:
"This is what we were looking for."
And they went back, retracing their steps.

65* [On their way] they met one of Our servants
to whom We had extended Our mercy
and whom We had instructed in Our Knowledge.
66. Moses said to him:
"May I join you to let you teach me
your insight about the right way?"
67. [The stranger] said:
"You won't have enough patience with me!
68. How can you be patient
with what you don't fully understand?"
69. [Moses] said:
"If God wills, you'll find me patient.
I won't disobey you in anything."
70. [The stranger] said:
"Follow me if you wish,
but ask me no questions before I speak to you first."

71. Then they proceeded on their way.
As they were sailing on a ship,
[the stranger] drilled a hole in her.

[Moses] said:
"Did you drill a hole to drown everyone on board?
What a strange thing to do!"
72. [The stranger] said:
"Didn't I warn you
that you won't have enough patience with me?"
73. [Moses] said:
"Don't blame me for forgetting,
and don't expect too much of me!"

74. Farther down the road they met a youth.
[The stranger] killed him.
[Moses] said:
"You killed an innocent [man]. Odious is your action
if it isn't in retaliation for murder!"
75. [The stranger] said:
"Didn't I tell you
that you won't have enough patience with me?"
76. [Moses] said:
"If I ask you another question, then go your way,
but for now, accept my apology!"

77. Farther on they met the dwellers of a town
whom they asked for food;
but they were not welcome there.
Then they came upon a wall that was about to collapse.
[The stranger] rebuilt it.
[Moses] said:
"You could've been paid for that, if you wanted to!"

78. [The stranger] said:
"It's time for us to part, but let me explain to you
the things that made you lose patience.
79. The ship belonged to poor people toiling upon the sea.
I damaged her because they were chased by a King
who was taking all the ships by force.
80* Regarding the boy, we feared
that he'd aggrieve his believing parents
by his rebellion and ingratitude.
81. We wished their Lord to replace him
[by a son] better in virtue and compassion.
82. As to the wall in the city,
it belongs to two young orphans.
There is a treasure intended for them under it.
Their father was a righteous man,
and your Lord wanted them to dig up their treasure
upon reaching manhood, as a mercy of your Lord.
Therefore, I did not act on my own.
This is the explanation of what made you lose patience."

83* — [O Muhammad!] If they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain, say:
"I'll tell you something about him."
84. Verily, We have established his power on the earth,
and We gave him access to all things.
85. [Once], while on his way,
86. he came upon the place where the sun sets
and found it setting in a muddy spring.
There he encountered some people.
We said:
— O Dhul-Qarnain! Punish them or treat them well.
87* [Dhul-Qarnain] said:
"We'll punish any one who does wrong,
and when he's returned to his Lord,
[God] will chastise him with a terrible retribution.
88. But for any one who believed and did right
there shall be a good reward,
and our command will be easy for him."

89. He followed his way
90* until he reached [the place] where the sun rises.
He saw it rising over a people
whom We have not sheltered from it.
91. And so it was, and We knew what would happen to him.

92. He proceeded farther on his way
93* until he reached two barriers
in front of which he met some people
who could scarcely understand his words.
94* They said:
"O Dhul-Qarnain!
Gog and Magog are spreading corruption in the land.
Shall we pay you a tribute
to build a dam between us and them?"
95* He said:
"The best for me is what My Lord has bestowed upon me.
Help me with power: I'll set a dam between you and them.
96. Bring me rods of iron!"
After levelling two mountainsides, he said:
"Fan [the fire]!"
When the flames appeared, he said:
"Bring them, and I'll pour molten lead over them!"

97. [Gog and Magog] were unable to climb over [the dam]
or to dig through it.

98* [Dhul-Qarnain] said:
"This is a mercy from my Lord,
but when the promise of my Lord is fulfilled,
He'll turn all of this into dust.
True is the promise of my Lord!"
99* On that Day We will send them
against each other in waves.

And when the trumpet resounds,
We will gather them all together.
100. On that Day We will have Hellfire
wide open for the disbelievers
101. whose eyes are veiled from remembering Me,
and who do not hear anything.
102. Do the disbelievers think
that they can take My servants
as protectors instead of Me?
Verily, We have prepared Hellfire
to shelter the disbelievers!

103. Say:
"Shall I tell you who shall lose most of his labor?
104. It's the one who wastes his efforts in this life,
imagining that he's doing good works."
105. These are the ones who denied the Signs of their Lord
and their meeting with Him.
Useless will be their works, and on Resurrection Day
We will not give them any credit —
106. their reward shall be Hellfire!
Indeed, they have not believed
and only mocked My Signs and My Messengers.
107* But those who have believed and done right,
shall receive as a gift the Gardens of Paradise,
108. and will remain therein for ever,
never wishing for anything better.

109. Say:
"If the sea were ink
for [writing] the Words of My Lord,
it would have surely run out
before the Words of my Lord were exhausted,
even if We had added an equal [sea] to it!"
110. Say:
"I'm a man like you,
but I've been inspired that your God is One God.
If someone hopes to meet his Lord,
let him do good works, worship his Lord,
and avoid associating anyone to Him!"

V. 4: "Son" could also be "child" or "offspring."

V. 9: "**Ar-raqim**" means "inscription." This story seems to be patterned on the legend of the seven sleepers of Ephesus that was popular during the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Decius (201-251).

A cave is a place of refuge for a soul from the demands of the world. It represents the hidden and the spiritual realm and when there are people in it, it is an image of the whole world. Therefore, caves are sanctified places, suitable for meditation. The Prophet used to hide in them from enemies, and many spiritually endowed have people spent all their lives in caves.

V. 12: Some relied on themselves, others on God's will.

V. 17: "In the middle [of the cave]" or "in the center of the world."

Vv. 19f: The moral of the story is that man often forms opinions before knowing all the facts. In these verses "you" is replaced by the more natural "we."

V. 21: Instead of thinking of the Judgment Day, the people offered to commemorate the youths by building them monuments.

V. 22: Details such as the exact number of youths in the cave are irrelevant. The vagueness of this number points out to the allegorical nature of the story.

V. 24: Acknowledging God's will, cf. S.68:17-33.

V. 25: "And they stayed in the cave three hundred and nine years." In the Koran, events take place in a sacral time. The same is true of the stories of Moses, Zhul-Qarnain, and Khidr who were endowed with uncanny knowledge and spiritual vision. So it was with David and Solomon (SS. 27,34): David understood the language of birds and ants, Solomon got the throne of the Queen of Sheba in an instant... In these stories, images are piled on top of images, there is no time and place, some words have no direct meaning, and there is a lack of logical continuity. It follows that even the best translation of the Koran is a man's collection of words. The true Words of God are only in the Arabic Koran.

Occasionally, translators introduce in their books copies of the Arabic original, but someone who can read the Koran in the original does not need a translation, and someone who does not know Arabic cannot be helped by the Arabic text.

V. 31: "Gardens of eternity" or Eden (**'Aden**), instead of "Gardens of Bliss."

V. 52: "A ravine" — a dam, or a place of perdition.

V. 58: Another variant — "Indeed, their term is fixed and they have no refuge [except in God]."

V. 60: The junction of two bodies of water like that of the Tigris and Euphrates is a metaphor about the contact between the physical world with the Unseen, where the water of life flows. There, the notions of virtue are dissolved, and the righteous **Khidr** (v.65) may seem to act like a criminal (vv. 71, 74).

V. 61: The fish could be a symbol of human knowledge that Moses had temporarily lost (cf. v.66).

V. 65: In the Muslim tradition, the mysterious person met by Moses is **Khidr** (the Green One). His Biblical prototype is King Melchisedec (Gen. 14:18-20), of whom it is said: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning, nor days, nor end of life." (Heb. 7:3). Khidr has reached ***the highest wisdom*** (cf. v.68). He is pure intellect, and some Muslims greet him upon entering an empty room, believing that he might reside there in spirit.

V. 80: Khidr refers to himself both as "I" and "we."

V. 83: Alexander the Great was identified with Ammon, an Egyptian god represented with two horns; hence his Koranic name the "Two-horned one" (**Dhul-Qarnain**). Here, he is the paragon of wisdom and virtue.

Vv. 87-88: Dhul-Qarnain behaves as he was told to do, but he acts cautiously and defers the final authority to God.

Vv. 90-91: Apparently, the people of the east led a very primitive life, and Dhul-Karnain, having received no instruction concerning them, has resumed his journey.

Vv. 93f: As the direction of the journey is not indicated, he presumably went farther east. A "dam" or "a barrier."

V. 94: The Biblical **Gog** and **Magog** were unruly tribes of Central Asia (cf. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him..." (Ezek. 38:1-2). The names Gog and Magog and the construction of a barrier against their incursions in the Asian Far West bring associations with the Mongol invasions and the Great Chinese Wall.

V. 95: Although Dhul-Qarnain was not interested in material gain, he was on a lower level of spirituality than Khidr.

V. 98: Being a righteous person, Dhul-Qarnein ascribes his good deeds to God's Providence.

V. 99: "We will send them against each other in waves" — We will let them fight among themselves.

V. 107: First use of the Persian word **firdus** for Paradise. The ritual public prayer is called **salat** in Persian and **namaz** in Turkish.

The custom of praying ***five*** times a day has been established after the revelation of the Koran. According to Islam, one ought to pray: 1) just after sunset; 2) when it is really dark; 3) at daybreak; 4) shortly after noon; and 5) midway between noon and sunset. These prayers are public: the household, the neighbors and passers-by may join in (S.40:60).

SURA 10 JONAH. ***Although S.10 is named after Jonah, it mentions him only in one verse (v.98). The sura speaks of Noah (vv. 71-73) and repeats the events related to Moses (vv. 74-93). The bulk of S.10 consists of the three elements the reader is familiar with by now, namely, Warning, Sign, and Say passages, so that part of this sura could also be placed with the Doxologies (Part V). Suras based essentially on these elements often mix early Meccan with later Medinan inspirational phrases and teachings. Like many later suras, S.10 defends monotheism against Associators of all persuasions.***

10. JONAH
Meccan, 109 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam ra.
Here are some Verses from the wise Scripture.

2. Why are people surprised that We have inspired
a man from their midst to warn them
and to bring to the believers the glad tidings
that their standing is truly high before their Lord!
But the disbelievers say:
"Indeed, he's a real magician!"

3* Verily, your Lord is God,
Who has created Heavens and earth in six days
and then sat firmly on the Throne to manage [His] Design.
There is no intercessor without His permission.
He is God, your Lord, so worship Him!
Would you not you come to your senses?
4. You shall all return to Him —
indeed, God's promise is true!

He starts the Creation and then repeats it
in order to give a just reward
to those who believed and worked good deeds.
But for those who denied Him, there is a boiling drink
and a painful punishment for their disbelief!

5* He is the One Who made the sun a luminary
and the moon a light, and marked its path by stations
to teach you how to count the years and how to compute.
God has created that only by the Truth,
and He explains the Signs to the people who understand.

6* Verily, in the contrast between night and day,
and in God's creations in the Heavens and earth,
there are Signs for the people who fear God.

7. Verily, those who do not hope to meet Us,
who enjoy the life of this world,
who are content with it and disregard Our Signs —
8. their abode shall be the Fire
for what they have prepared for themselves.
9. Verily, those who believed and worked good deeds,
their Lord shall guide them on the path of their faith.
Rivers shall flow at their feet in the Gardens of Bliss.
10. Their prayer will be there: Glory to You, O God!
their greeting wll be: Peace!,
and the conclusion of their prayer will be:
Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!

11. If God were to hasten evil to people
as fast as they want to hasten their well-being,
their fate would have already been sealed!
Those who do not hope to meet Us,
We let them wander blindly in sin.
12. When harm touches a man, he calls upon Us
lying down on his side, sitting, or standing.
But as soon as We free him from harm,
he walks by, as if he had never called upon Us
because of the harm that touched him.
This is how the deeds of the sinners
are made attractive to them!

13. We have destroyed former generations
while they were transgressing.
Their Messengers came to them with the Proofs,
yet they refused to believe.
This is how We reward the people who transgress!
14. We made you their successors in the land
to let Us observe how you will behave.

15. When Our clear Verses are recited to them,
those who do not hope to meet with Us, say to you:
"Bring us another Koran or change this one!"
Say:
"I can't change it on my own accord:

I'm following only what is inspired to me.
If I disobeyed my Lord,
I'd fear the punishment of the Great Day."

16* Say:
"God willing, I wouldn't be reciting to you [the Koran],
and He wouldn't have let you know about it.
Indeed, I've spent my whole life with you,
so why don't you understand?"

17. Who is more unjust than the one
who slanders God or rejects His Signs?
Verily, the wrong-doers will not succeed!
18. Besides God they worship some [idols]
that neither harm nor benefit them. They say:
"These are our intercessors before God!"
Say:
"Can you tell God anything
He doesn't already know in Heavens and on earth?
Glory to Him! Exalted He is above anything they associate!"

19* In the beginning people formed one community,
but later on they went their separate ways.
Had it not been for an earlier Word from your Lord,
their differences would have already been settled.
20* They say:
"Why does't his Lord send him a Sign?"
Say:
"The future is in God's hands.
Wait, and I'll be waiting with you."
21. As soon as We make people taste of Our mercy
after adversity had touched them,
they start scheming against Our Signs.
Say:
"God is faster at scheming,
and all your schemes are recorded by Angels!"

22. He is the One, Who guides you
on your path by land and sea.
When they are sailing on ships
and the wind is favorable, they rejoice.
But when a gale comes along upon them,
and the waves lash at them from all sides,
they think of death and call to God truly believing in Him:
"If you rescue us, we'll be so grateful!"
23. But after He rescues them,
they break the law by transgressing in the land.
O people! Your transgressions shall turn against you —
they are enjoyable only in this life.
And when you return to Us,
We will reveal to you what you have done.

24. The present life is like rainwater
that We pour down from the sky!
Mingling with the soil, it [brings forth] the plants

that feed people and cattle.
When the land turns golden and beautifies itself,
its owners think they control it, but by night or day
We issue Our Command and strip it naked,
as if it were not thriving the day before.
This is how We interpret the Signs to the people who think!

25* God invites to the Home of Peace
and guides to the right path anyone He wills.
26. Those who do good will receive some goodness,
and then some more [goodness].
Neither gloom nor shame shall cover their faces —
indeed, they are the dwellers of Paradise,
where they shall dwell for ever.
27. As for those who amassed evil,
their reward shall be a matching evil.
They shall be overcome by shame,
and no one will protect them from God.
Their faces shall be covered with the likeness of shreds
from the depth of the darkest night —
indeed, they are the dwellers of Fire,
where they shall remain for ever!

28* The Day We round them up, We will say to the Associators:
— Go, you and your partners, each to your place!
We will separate them, and their partners shall say:
"It wasn't us that you worshiped,
29. and God is sufficient as a witness between us.
Indeed, we had no idea that you were serving us."
30* Then every soul shall realize what it has brought forth.
They shall be returned to God, their true Lord,
and their inventions shall vanish from their sight.
31. Say:
"Who provides you with sustenance from Heaven and earth?
Who has power over [your] hearing and seeing?
Who brings forth the living from the dead
and the dead from the living? Who manages the Design?"
They shall say:
"It's God".
Say:
"Then why don't you fear Him?"
32. He is God, your true Lord,
and what is not Truth is nothing but error!
So why are you turning away?

33. The Word of your Lord has prevailed
against those who indulge in iniquity.
Verily, they will never believe!
34. Say:
"Can any of your partners start a creation
and then repeat it?"
Say:
"It's God, Who starts a creation and then repeats it.
Then why are you so deluded?"

35. Say:
"Can any of your partners guide you to the Truth?"
Say:
"It's God Who guides to the Truth!"
Who is more worthy to be followed:
the One, Who guides to the Truth,
or the one who does not guide
unless he is guided himself?
What is the matter with you if such is your judgement!
36. Most of them follow only conjectures,
but, verily, conjectures do not stand up to the Truth!
Verily, God knows best what they are doing.

37. Nobody but God could have composed this Koran!
It confirms what has been revealed before
and explains the Scripture of the Lord of the Worlds
that cannot be doubted.
38. [The disbelievers] say:
"He forged it!"
Say:
"Produce a single sura comparable to it
and call on anyone you want, except God,
if you're telling the truth!"

39. They reject what they cannot grasp with their knowledge
before its interpretation had reached them,
and so did their predecessors,
but see what was the end of those who did wrong!
40. Some of them believe, and others do not believe;
but your Lord knows best which of them are corrupt!
41* And if they reject you, say:
"I have my work, and you have your work.
You're not responsible for what I do,
and I'm not responsible for what you do."
42* Some of them pretend that they listen to you,
but can you make the deaf understand if they cannot hear?
43. Others pretend to be looking at you,
but can you guide the blind if they cannot see?

44. Verily, God is never unjust to the people —
the people are unjust to themselves.
45. The Day He gathers them together, it will seem to them
that they have lived only one hour of a day.
They will recognize one another, and those who denied
the meeting with God and rejected Guidance
will surely be the losers.

46. — [O Muhammad!] Whether We show you
part of Our promise to them, or We [first] take your soul,
they shall return to Us!
God is witness to everything they do!

47. Each nation has its Messenger.

When the Messenger arrives, their matter is settled
according to the law, and nobody is treated unjustly.
48. They say:
"When will this promise come true
if you're telling the truth?"
49. Say:
"I cannot to harm or benefit myself, except if God wills.
Each nation has its term, and this term cannot be delayed
or advanced by a single hour."
50. Say:
"What do you think: if His punishment overtakes you
during the night or during the day,
what part of it the sinners would like to hasten?
51* Or if it does overtake you, would you believe in Him?
Then why were you so eager to hasten it before?"
52. And the wrong-doers shall be told:
— Taste of the everlasting punishment!
Should you not be rewarded as you deserve?
53. They ask you: "Is it really true?"
Say:
"Yes! By my Lord, this is the Truth,
and you can't avoid [it]!"
54. Every single sinning soul,
if it possessed everything on earth,
would give it all away to ransom herself.
At the sight of the punishment
they will assert that they repent,
but equitable shall be their sentence —
they shall not be treated unjustly!

55. Verily, everything in Heavens and earth belongs to God.
God's promise is true, but the majority do not know [it].
56* He gives life and death, and to Him is your return!

57. O people!
You have received an Admonition from your Lord.
It is a cure for the hearts,
a Guidance and a mercy for the believers!
58. Say:
"Let them rejoice at God's favors and His mercy —
indeed, that's better than what they're hoarding."
59* Say:
"Don't you see what God sends you for sustenance?
But why have you prohibited part of it
and made another part of it lawful?"
Say:
"Did God allow it to you, or are you making up about God?"
60. What do those who make up about God
think about the Resurrection Day?
Verily, God is generous to people,
but most of them are ungrateful!
61. Whatever your trade,
whatever you recite from the Koran,

whatever the work [you] undertake,
We are witnessing what attracts you the most.
Even the flimsiest particle cannot hide
from your Lord on earth or in heaven!
And there is nothing smaller or larger than it
that is not in the clear Book.
62. Verily, the friends of God should not fear nor grieve.
63. For those who have believed and feared God,
64. there shall be good news in this life and in the Hereafter.
Immutable are the Words of God — in this is a great success!

65. Do not let their talk sadden you —
indeed, all power is with God.
He is the Hearer, the All-Knowing!
66. Verily, everything in Heavens and earth belongs to God.
And those who call on partners instead of God,
what do they follow? —
They follow only conjectures and lies!

67. He is the One, Who gave you the night to rest
and the day to see.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who listen!
68* They say:
"God has begotten a son!"
Glory to Him! He is rich!
Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to Him —
you have no part in it,
and you have no right to say of God what you do not know!

69. Say:
"Verily, those who lie about God
shall not be successful!"
70. Let they enjoy themselves in this world;
then they shall return to Us,
and We will make them taste
a severe punishment for their disbelief.

71* Tell them the story of Noah. He said to his people:
"O my people! Perhaps my presence
and my reminding you of God's Signs are hard on you!
While I'm putting my trust in God,
make up your mind about your matters and partners,
clarify your intent from all ambiguity,
then judge me without delay!
72* But if you turn away, I'm not asking you for a reward —
verily, my reward is from God,
and I am commanded to be a Muslim."
73. They rejected [Noah],
but We saved him with his companions in the ark
and made them inherit [the earth].
And We drowned those who rejected Our Signs.
See what was the end of those who were warned!

74. After him We have sent many Messengers with Proofs
to peoples who refused to believe
in what they had been rejecting before.
This is how We seal the hearts of the sinners!

75. Then We sent Moses and Aaron with Our Signs
to Pharaoh and his attendants.
But they were arrogant and sinful people.
76. When Our Truth came to them, they said:
"This is obvious magic!"
77. Moses said:
"How can you say that about the Truth
that has come to you? Is this [really] magic?
The magicians won't be successful!"
78. They said:
"Didn't you come to us to divert us from our fathers' ways
and to become, you and your brother, great in the land?
We'll never believe you!"

79. Pharaoh said:
"Round up to me all the skillful magicians!"
80. When the magicians came, Moses said to them:
"Throw what you intended to throw!"

81. They threw [their staves] and Moses said:
"What you've done is magic,
and, verily, God will bring it to naught!
Verily, God doesn't support the work of the corrupt!
82. God establishes the Truth by His Words,
even if the sinners hate it!"

83* But fearing persecution
from Pharaoh and his attendants,
only a few of his people believed Moses.
Verily, Pharaoh wielded a great power in the land,
and he was transgressing all bounds.
84. Moses said:
"O my people! If you really believe in God
and surrender to Him, then put your trust in Him!"
85. They said:
"In God we trust! O our Lord!
Don't make us victims of the people who do evil,
86. save us by Your mercy from the people who disbelieve!"

87* We inspired Moses and his brother:
— Build houses for your people in Egypt
and turn these houses into houses of worship.
Set up the prayer
and bring the good news to the believers.
88* Moses said:
"O our Lord! You gave Pharaoh and his attendants
beauty and wealth in this life.
O our Lord! Is it to let them lead astray from Your way?

O our Lord! Wipe out their wealth and harden their hearts,
so that they won't believe
until they see the painful punishment!"
89. [God] said:
— Your prayer is well taken,
so be firm and do not walk in the path of the ignorant.

90* We led the Children of Israel across the sea.
Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them in rancor and enmity.
But as the sea was closing upon him, he said:
"I believe there's no god, except the One
in Whom the Sons of Israel believe,
and I'm submitting myself to God!"
91. — Now, at last! And before that you were a rebel,
[one] of the corrupt,
92* but today We will save your body
to let you be a Sign for those who are with you.
Verily, many people still disregard Our Signs!

93. We settled the Children of Israel in a blessed haven
and gave them the best of provisions.
They did not disagree among themselves
until Knowledge came to them.
Verily, your Lord will judge their disputes on Judgment Day!

94* — [O Muhammad!] If you have doubts
about what We have descended upon you,
ask those who have read the Scripture before you.
Indeed, Truth came to you from your Lord —
so do not be of those who have doubts about it
95. and reject the Signs of God,
otherwise you shall be among the losers.
96. Verily, those against whom the Word of your Lord
was fulfilled, will not believe
97. until they saw the painful punishment,
even if all the Signs appeared before them.

98. How is it that not a [single] community,
except the people of Jonah,
believed to their own advantage?
As soon as they believed, We lifted from them
the humiliating punishment in this life
and allowed them to live a little longer.
99. God willing, everyone in the land would have believed.
But can you compel people
to believe against their will?
100. No soul will believe without God's permission,
and He will cast ignominy
upon those who do not understand.
101. Say:
"Look at everything in the heavens and earth!"
No Signs and no Warners can help the disbelievers.
102. Can they expect anything different

from what happened to those who died before them?
Say:
"So wait, and I'll be waiting with you!"
103. Then We will save Our Messengers and the believers —
indeed, Our task is to save those who have faith!
104. Say:
"O people! You can doubt my religion,
but I won't worship what you worship besides God.
I do worship God, the One, Who will recall you,
and I'm ordered to remain with the believers."

105*Like a Hanif, turn your face to religion
and don't be an Associator.

106. Don't call on anything besides God
that can neither help nor harm you,
lest you be a transgressor!
107. If God touches you with harm,
He alone is able to lift it from you,
and if He wishes you good,
nobody can retard His favor.
He dispenses it to those of His servants He wills.
He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.
108. Say:
"O people! The Truth of your Lord has reached you.
Whoever accepts Guidance, it's good for his soul,
and whoever goes astray, it's to her detriment.
And I'm not your guardian!"

109. — [O Muhammad!] Follow what is inspired to you
and be patient until God passes His judgment —
indeed, He is the best of all judges!

V. 3: "The intercessors" in this verse are the idols. They are the "partners" mentioned in v.18. The real intercessors or protectors are the Angels. They operate under the authority of God, Who is the ultimate and the only Protector (cf. S.86:4).

V. 5: The stations in the sky are the signs of the Zodiac.

V. 6: The Koran is rich in contrasts: night and day, right and wrong, past and present, fortitude and cowardice, truth and deception, pride and shame, Hell and Paradise, freedom of choice and predestination. These contrasts are complementing and not opposing each other. Dualism, as it is understood in the West, is incompatible with Islamic thought, but some of its forms came to be tolerated under the strong influence of Manicheism.

God knows all about each of His creatures; their fate is in His hands. In His infinite compassion, God extends His mercy to the repenting disbelievers. Are not the most often mentioned Names of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, and the Forgiving.

The Koran, just as S.10 itself, is the sum of the religious, philosophical, and historical experience of Arabian nations in the VIIth century. It deals with the spiritual and material quests of the people of that time; therefore, those who do not believe in it must still consider it as one of the Great Books of World Culture.

V. 16: The Prophet started receiving the Koran when he was forty years old — fully grown physically and spiritually.

V. 19: "The Word," i.e., God's judgment or design. It is also God's Law. God gives a reprieve to the apostates of different creeds; their differences will be settled on Judgment Day.

V. 20: "The future" or "the Unseen."

V. 25: "The Home of Peace" — a metaphor for spiritual life.

V. 28: God makes the idols accuse their worshipers (S.28:63).

V. 30: "What it has brought forth" — what it has done in life.

V. 41: This verse seems to be addressed to the Jews.

V. 42: "Some of them pretend to be listening to you, but can you make the deaf understand if they cannot hear?" In the original: "some of them pretend to be listening to you. But is it possible to make the deaf hear if they cannot understand?"

V. 51: "Would you believe in ***Him***" or in ***its*** [punishment]? Usually ambiguity impoverishes a text, but in the Koran it may be enriching when it encourages the reader to think and wonder.

V. 56: God has instituted death, as He has created sin in order to let the people be free to choose righteousness in the period of time allotted to them. Angels do not have the freedom to sin and cannot die.

V. 59: The Jews are blamed for self-imposed dietary rules.

V. 68: This verse is obviously aimed at the Christians.

Glorification of God **(tamjeed)** must be constantly on the lips of the believers. Usually they do it by saying: **subhana-llah.**

V. 71: "Tell them the story of Noah" — the story or the news? Narratives about the Prophets can be called stories because their protagonists act and talk, and also news because they are communications with one central message: fear God and serve Him.

V. 72: "I am commanded to be a Muslim" or: ...to be one of those who submit themselves [to God]. Submission to God is not valid if it is blind: it must be accompanied by a determination of being righteous.

V. 83: "Of his people" — of the people of Moses or of the people of Pharaoh — probably of the latter (cf. S.7:120).

V. 87: The **qibla,** "the place of prayer" or the direction for praying. At first the qibla was Jerusalem **(Al-Quds)**, "the sacred city"; thus Daniel prayed in the direction of Jerusalem three times a day (Dan. 6:10). Later on Jerusalem was replaced by Mecca. Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem are the three most sacred sites of Islam. The Shi'ites add Najaf and Kufa in Iraq to this list.

V. 88: "Is it to make them lead [others] astray from Your way" or "let them go off Your way!"

V. 90, 92: Apparently, Pharaoh repented before he died, and his body floated up (for burial?).

V. 94: "Those who preceded you in reading the Scripture" — here, "Scripture" refers to the Revelation received before the Koran.

V. 105: The posterity of Abraham and Ishmael were **hanifs**, righteous men, the monotheists of pre-Islamic times. This appellation was adopted by the companions of the Prophet before "Muslim" came into general use. Islam is the primordial "natural" religion; therefore, all the Biblical prophets, including Adam, were Muslims.

Sura 40 The Believer. ***Like S.10, S.40 contains early and late passages; thus it marks the transition between Meccan and Medinan suras. The composite nature of the sura is felt in the Arabic text by its frequent changes of rhyme. A new rendering of the story of Moses (vv. 23-27) is introduced and concluded by Warning and apocalyptic passages. The sura speaks of an anonymous believer who tried to turn the Egyptians to faith (vv. 28-35; 38-45). Vv. 61-76 are a sustained doxology.***

40. THE BELIEVER
Meccan, 85 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2. This Scripture is sent down from God,
the Mighty, the Knowing,
3. Who forgives sins and accepts repentance.
He is strict in punishment and rich in bounties.
There is no god but Him, and to Him [is our] return!

4. Nobody argues about the Signs of God,
except the disbelievers.
Do not be deluded by their resourcefulness in the land!
5* [The Signs] have been rejected before them
by the people of Noah and other confederates.
Each people conspired to seize their Messenger
and to dispute unfairly with him to taint the Truth.
But I seized them — such was My punishment!
6. The Word of your Lord against the disbelievers came true —
they are indeed the dwellers of the Fire!

7* Those who bear the Throne of their Lord,
surround Him and glorify Him.
They believe in Him and ask forgiveness for the believers:
"O our Lord!
You encompass everything with mercy and Knowledge.
Forgive those who turn to You and follow Your way.
Save them from the punishment by the blazing Fire!
8. O our Lord! Lead them into the Gardens of Eden
that You promised to them
and to the upright among their fathers,
their spouses, and their offspring.
You are the Almighty, the Wise.

9. Preserve them from evil deeds,
and on that Day, bestow Your mercy
upon those whom You have preserved from evil.
This shall be a great success!"

10. Verily, the disbelievers shall be told:
— God hates you more than you hate yourselves.
Indeed, you rejected faith
when you had been called to it.

11. They will say:
"O our Lord! You have made us die twice,
and twice You have revived us.
Don't we have a way out
after we confessed our sins?"
12. — [No!] You rejected faith
when you were called to One God,
yet you believed when you joined partners to Him.
You shall be judged by God, the Exalted, the Great.

13. He is the One, Who shows you His Signs
and sends you sustenance from the sky.
But only those who turn [to Him] remember it!
14. So call on God and devote yourselves entirely to Him,
even if this is hateful for the disbelievers.
15. The most exalted in rank is the Owner of the Throne!
He inspires by His Command
to warn of the Meeting Day
anyone of His servants He wills.
16. On that Day when they come forth before God,
they shall not be able to conceal anything.
Who will be the Sovereign on that Day? —
God, the One, the Victorious.
17. On that Day every soul shall be rewarded
for everything she had amassed.
There shall be no injustice on that Day!
Verily, God is quick at accounting!

18. Warn them that close by is the Day
when their hearts shall be choked with grief
and will rise to their throats.
Then the sinners will have neither a friend
nor an intercessor to rely upon.
19. [God] knows the treachery of the eyes
and the secrets of the hearts.
20. God judges by the Truth, but those
whom they invoke besides Him do not judge anything.
Verily, God is the Hearing, the Seeing.

21* Do they not see when they travel about in the land
what was the end of their predecessors?
Yet, they were superior to them in power
and in their traces on earth!
God seized them for their sins,
and nobody protected them from God.
22. God seized them for rejecting the Messengers
who came to them with the Proofs.
Verily, He is powerful and strict in punishment!

23. We sent Moses with Our Signs and a clear authority
24. to Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah.
But they said:
"He's a magician and a liar!"

25. And when he brought the Truth from Us, they said:
"Kill the sons of those who share his belief,
but spare their women."
The plots of the disbelievers are the way to perdition!
26. Pharaoh said:
"Let me kill Moses, and let him turn to his Lord.
I'm afraid that he'll change your religion
or spread corruption in the land."
27. Moses said:
"I'm calling to my Lord — your Lord,
against anyone who makes much of himself
and disbelieves in the Reckoning Day."

28* One of the believers from Pharaoh's household
who was concealing his faith said:
"Would you really kill a man only because he says:
'My Lord is God!'
Yet he came to you with the Proofs of your Lord.
If he's lying, his lies will turn against him,
but if he's telling the truth, then you'll suffer
what he's been warning you about.
Verily, God will not guide an inveterate liar!
29. O my people! Today the power
and the land are in your hands.
But who would save us from God's retribution
if it fell upon us?"

Pharaoh said:
"I want to show you what I see myself,
and I'm guiding you only on the way of righteousness."
30. Then the believer said:
"O my people! I fear for you [what happened]
on the Day of the confederates,

31. or [what happened] to the peoples of Noah,
'Ad and Thamood, and those who followed them.
God doesn't wish injustice to [His] servants!

32. O my people! I fear for you the Day when you'll be called,
33. the Day when you'll run away showing your backs,
when nobody will intercede for you before God.
Whoever God sends astray shall be left without a guide!

34. Joseph came to you with the Proofs,
but you doubted what he brought to you.
And when he died, you said:
'God shall not send any Messenger after him.'
This is how God sends astray those
who are given to dissipation and doubt!
35. Great is the hatred of God and the believers
for those who contest the Signs of God without authority.
This is how God seals the heart of every haughty sinner!"

36* Pharaoh said:
"O Haman! Build me a lofty tower to be my way —
37. my way to heaven — that I could use to ascend
to the God of Moses, although I think he's lying."
Thus the evil of his deeds
was made attractive to Pharaoh,
and he was turned away from the [straight] path.
Pharaoh's plot had led him to ruin!

38. And the believer said:
"O my people! Follow me,
and I'll guide you to the way of righteousness.
39. O my people! Fleeting is the life of this world,
but verily, the Hereafter is a lasting abode!
40. Whoever does evil shall be rewarded with the same.
But the men or women who do good and believe
shall enter Paradise
where they shall receive unlimited provisions.
41. O my people! If I call you to salvation,
why do you call me to the Fire?
42. You urge me to renounce God
and to associate with Him something unknown to me.
But I'm calling you to the Mighty, the Forgiving.
43. It's obvious that your're calling me
to what isn't worth to be invoked
either in this life or in the Hereafter.
To God is our return!
The extravagant shall dwell in the Fire!

44. Soon you'll remember my words!
As for myself, I'll commit my case to God.
Verily, God is watching [His] servants!"
45. God saved him from the evil that had been schemed,
but Pharaoh's household got an evil retribution:
46. the Fire into which they shall be brought
every morning and evening.
The Day when the Hour comes, [God will say]:
— Submit Pharaoh's people to the harshest punishment!

47. But they will argue among themselves even in the Fire.
The weak among them shall say to the arrogant ones:
"Haven't we followed you?
So take upon yourselves a share of the Fire!"
48. But the arrogant ones will say:
"We're all in it!
Verily, such was God's judgment upon [His] servants!"
49* The ones in the Fire shall say to the Keepers of Hell:
"Call onto your Lord to make Him shorten the punishment
[at least] by one day!"
50* They shall say:
"Haven't your Messengers come to you with the Proofs?
They shall say:
"Yes, they have!"

They shall be told:
"Then pray!"
But the prayer of the disbelievers is just a delusion!

51. We will surely assist Our Messengers and the believers
in this life and on the Day
when the witnesses take the stand.
52. On that Day excuses will not help the wrong-doers:
for them is a curse, for them is an evil abode!

53. We gave Moses the Guidance,
and We made the Sons of Israel heirs to the Scripture —
54. it is a Guidance and a Reminder for those who understand.

55* — [O Mohammad!] Be patient.
Verily, God's promise is true.
Ask forgiveness for your sin
and praise your Lord evenings and mornings.
56. Verily, only those who have no authority
argue about the Signs of God.
They have just one [wish] in their hearts:
to be greater than the others.
But they shall not see it come true!
And you, seek refuge in God —
indeed, He is the Hearing, the Observing.

57* The creation of the Heavens and the earth
was more important than the creation of man,
but most people do not understand [it].
58. The blind cannot be compared with the seeing,
and those who believe and do good with the evil-doers.
How little [of the Guidance] do you remember!

59. Verily, the Hour is approaching — no doubt about it,
but most people do not believe!
60* Your Lord said:
— Call on Me and I will answer you!
But those who are too proud to serve Me
shall soon enter Hell in disgrace.

61. God! He gave you the night to let you rest
and the day to let you see!
Verily, God is full of mercy for people,
but most people are ungrateful.
62. He is God, your Lord, the Creator of all things.
There is no god but Him, so why are you turning away?
63. Indeed, the ones who turn away
are those who reject the Signs of God!
64. God! He gave you the earth as a dwelling,
and the sky as a canopy; He gave you a shape,
and how attractive He made your shape!
He provided you with the best sustenance.
He is God, your Lord.

Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds!
65. He is the Living One, and there is no god besides Him.
So call upon Him and serve Him faithfully in religion.
Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!
66. Say:
"Ever since I have received the Proofs from my Lord,
I've been forbidden to call
upon the ones you worship besides God.
I've been ordered to surrender
to the Lord of the Worlds."

67. He is the One, Who created you from dust,
then from a sperm drop, then from a blood clot;
then He brought you forth as an infant
and let you mature and grow to old age,
albeit some of you will die before their appointed time.
Perhaps you would reflect!

68. He is the One, Who gives life and death.
When He decides a case, He says to it:
— Let it be! And it is.

69. Don't you see how those
who argue about the Signs of God
are turning away?
70. They reject the Scripture
and what We have sent down to them with Our Messengers.
But soon they shall know,
71. when with yokes on their necks
they are dragged in chains
72. into scalding water,
and then into the Fire to be burned!
73. They will be told:
"Where are those you associated
74. with God?"
They shall say:
"They have abandoned us!
And we have never invoked anything!"
This is how God sends the disbelievers astray!
75. — This is because you wrongfully rejoiced in the land
and were arrogant.
76. Enter the gates of Hellfire and stay therein for ever.
What an evil abode for the arrogant!

77* — [O Muhammad!] Arm yourself with patience!
Verily, God's promise is true.
Even if [before] recalling you [to Us]
We show you a part
of what We are threatening them with,
they shall all return to Us!
78. We have been sending Messengers before you.
We have told you about some of them,
but We have not told you about the others.

But no Messenger could have brought a Sign
without God's consent.
When God's decision is announced,
the matter shall be decided in Truth,
and the loss shall be upon the liars.

79. God is the One, Who has given you domestic animals,
some to ride upon and some to use for food.
80. They are useful to you for another purpose:
they enable you to reach any destination
according to your hearts' [desire].
They transport you like ships.

81. He is ever showing you His Signs.
Which of God's Signs will you then deny?

82. Do they not see when they travel in the land
what was the end of their predecessors?
They were greater in number and stronger in power,
and in the traces [they left] in the land.
Yet, what they had hoarded has not profited them!
83. When their Messengers came to them with the Proofs,
they exulted in their scholarship,
until they were struck down
by what they were laughing at.

84. At the sight of Our punishment, they said:
"We believe in one God,
and we reject what we used to associate with Him."
85. But after they see Our punishment,
faith will not benefit them any more!
Such is the Law of God for His servants,
and the disbelievers will suffer a loss!

V. 5: Nowadays, the word **hezb** (pl. **ahzab**) means a political ***party***. Here it refers to the ***confederation*** or alliance of evil forces (see also v.30 and S.38:11,13). In later suras it applies to the confederation against Islam, as in S.33, ***The Confederates***.

V. 7: "Those who support the Throne" are the Angels or those who fulfill God's commandments (cf. Isa. 6:1-2 and Ezek. 10:1).

V. 21: "The traces" are archeological ruins (see v.82).

V. 28: This man from Pharaoh's household is not a Biblical character.

V. 36: Haman has been encountered in S.28:8.

V. 49: The Keepers of Hell are the Angels guarding it.

V. 50: The prayer of a disbeliever has no value or purpose. As in Christian teaching, communion with God requires His Grace.

V. 55: Like all humans, the Prophet was not blameless.

V. 57: According to this verse, the center of Creation is not man, but the sky and the earth. Man's assumption that he is at the center of the Universe is false, even if he is one step above the Angels.

V. 60: The private prayer is called **da'wa** and the communal prayer, **salat**. It is the first one that is meant here.

SURA 38 [THE LETTER] SAD. ***S.38 starts with castigations of polytheists and ends with descriptions of Hell. Conspicuous is the use of the word "Reminder." Parables about David (vv. 17-26) and Solomon (vv. 30-40) constitute new narrative elements. Intercalated between them are the stories of Job (vv. 41-44) and Iblis (vv. 71-85).***

38. [The Letter] S A D
Meccan, 88 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Sad. By the Koran and its Reminder!

2* The disbelievers are [mired] in pride and dissent.
3. How many generations We have destroyed before them!
When they called [to Us],
it was too late for their salvation!
4. They were surprised
that a Warner came from their midst.
The disbelievers said:
"He's a wizard, a liar!
5. How could he combine [all] gods in one God?
Verily, this is such a strange thing!"
6. Their chieftains retired, [saying]:
"Go your way and hold fast to your gods,
it's obviously a plot!
7. We haven't heard anything like that in the old creed —
these are nothing but fabrications!
8. And why did the Reminder descend upon him
and not upon one of us?"
— Yes, they have doubts about My Reminder.
But they have not tasted My punishment yet!

9. Do they own the treasury of the bounties of your Lord,
the Mighty, the Giver?
10. Do they own the Heavens and earth and what is in between?
Even if they hoist themselves [to Heaven] on ropes.
11. the army of their confederation shall be defeated there!

12. Before them, the peoples of Noah, 'Ad,
and Pharaoh, the lord of stakes, disbelieved [in Us],
13. and Thamood, and the people of Lot,
and the dwellers al-'Aika — all their confederations!
14. They have all rejected their Messengers,
and thus deserved My punishment.

15. They are waiting for the single Shout
that shall not be postponed,
16. They say:
"Our Lord, hasten our lot before the Reckoning Day!"

17* — [O Muhammad!] Bear patiently whatever they say,
and remember Our servant David,

the man of strength who used to turn [to Us].
18* We made the mountains join him
in glorifying [Us] evenings and at sunrise.
19. And the birds flocked together
to join him in turning [to Us].
20. We bolstered his kingdom
and gave him Wisdom and eloquence.

21* Have you heard the story of the two litigants?
They climbed over the wall into his chamber.
22. David was scared when they appeared before him.
They said:
"Don't be afraid! We are fighting each other
because one of us has wronged the other one.
Judge between us by the Truth, but don't judge unjustly,
and guide us to the right way."
23. [One of them said]:
"This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes,
and I've only one. He said to me:
'Put her in my care', and he insisted on his demand."
24* [David] said:
"He has surely wronged you
by insisting that you add your ewe to his flock.
Verily, partners often do wrong to each other,
but not those who believe and do good works,
but there are so few of them!"

David understood that We were testing him.
He asked his Lord to forgive him;
he prostrated himself and turned [to Him].
25. We forgave him, brought him near Us,
and gave him a good retreat:

26* — O David! We appoint you Our deputy on earth.
Judge between men by the Truth
and do not indulge in passions,
lest they divert you from God's way.
Verily, those who strayed from God's way
shall receive a severe punishment
for forgetting the Reckoning Day.

27. We have created the heaven and the earth,
and what is in between not without purpose
as the disbelievers pretend.
Woe from the Fire to those who disbelieve!
28. Can We treat those who believed and did right
like those who spread corruption in the land?
Can We treat the God-fearing like the corrupt?

29* This is the blessed Scripture
that We have sent down to you
to let [people] meditate on its Verses
and let the intelligent ones be reminded.

30. To David We gave a son, Solomon, an outstanding servant,
who, verily, used to turn [to Us].
31* One evening, they brought him a few highbred steeds.
32. He said:
"My love for beauty distracts me from remembering my Lord."
[When the sun] hid behind the veil [of the night],
33* [he said]:
"Bring them back to me!"
And he began to stroke their legs and necks.

34* We were testing Solomon
when We placed a dead body on his throne.
But he turned to Us
35. and said:
"O my Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me a dominion
that nobody will ever deserve after me,
for You're the Giver [of all bounties]!
36. We subjected to him the wind
to blow softly at his command any way he chose,
37. and Satans — builders and divers of all kinds,
38. and others bound in chains.
39. [And We said]:
— This is Our gift to you!
You may pass it along or keep it outright.
40* Verily, We admitted him to Our Presence
and gave him a good retreat.

41. Remember Our servant Job. He called out to his Lord:
"Satan has afflicted me with suffering and distress!"
42. — [O Job!] Stomp [the ground] with your foot,
and you shall have cool [water] for washing and drinking.
43. We returned him his family and doubled its size
as a mercy from Us and as a Reminder
for those who can reason.

44* — Take a wisp [of grass] in your hand,
strike [your wife] with it,
and do not break [your oath]!
We found him a patient and outstanding servant.
Verily, he used to turn often [to Us]!

45. Remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
men of power and insight.
46* We purified them with purity
and reminded them about [the future] abode.
47. For Us they were among the elect and the upright.
48* And remember Ishmael, Elisha and Dhul-Kifl —
they were all among the upright.

49. This is a Reminder that, verily,
there is a splendid abode for the God-fearing:
50. the Gardens of Eden with its gates wide open for them.

51. Therein they shall recline,
asking for a variety of fruits and drinks.
52. Beside them there shall be [females] of their age
with modest glances.
53. This is what is promised to you for the Reckoning Day!
54. Verily, such is Our unlimited provision!
55. So be it!
As for the sinners, there shall be an evil refuge:
56. Hellfire, in which they shall burn — evil is this bed!
57* So be it!
Therein they shall drink boiling water, a chilling beverage,
58. and more of such muck.

59. Behold the crowd that rushes with you!
No welcome for them — they shall all burn in the Fire!
60. They shall say [to their leaders]:
"Yes, it's all because of you!
It's you who aren't welcome!
It's you who brought us to this wretched destination!"
61. They shall also say:
"O our Lord! Double the punishment by the Fire
to the one who brought this upon us!"
62* And they shall say:
"What's wrong with us,
why don't we see those we deemed wicked
63. and treated with mockery?
Why don't we see them anymore?"
64. Verily, this is how the inmates of the Fire
will be bickering among themselves!

65. Say:
"I'm truly a Warner!
There is no god besides God, the One, the Victorious,
66. the Lord of Heavens and earth and what is in between.
He's the Almighty, the All-Forgiving."
67. Say:
"This is a great Message, yet you turn away from it!
69. I don't know about the deliberations of the Powers on High.
70. I've been inspired only to be a clear Warner!"

71. And your Lord said to the Angels:
— I am going to create a mortal from clay.
72. After I shape him and breathe of My spirit into him,
prostrate yourselves before him!
73. The Angels prostrated themselves in a body,
74. but not Iblis who was arrogant and became a disbeliever.

75. — O Iblis! What kept you from prostrating yourself
before the one I made with My own hands?
Are you so haughty or are you one of the Highest?
76. [Iblis] said: "I'm better than he is,
since You made me of fire, and him of clay."
77. — Get out of here! May you be stoned,

78. and may My curse be upon you till Judgment Day!
79. [Iblis] said:
"O my Lord! Grant me a reprieve till Resurrection Day."
80. — Get a reprieve
81. till the Day of the appointed time!
82. [Iblis] said:
"[I swear] by Your greatness
that I'll seduce them by evil, all of them to the last one,
83. except Your devoted servants!"
84. — This is the Truth, and I speak the Truth!
85. Truly, I will fill Hellfire with you
and all those who are following you.
86. Say:
"I'm not asking you for a fee and I'm not a liar!
87. This is only a Reminder to the Worlds.
88. Soon you will learn all the truth about it."

V. 1: "The Reminder" **(zikr)** brings up the ideas of warning, remembrance, teaching, revelation, and even mystical mood.

Vv. 2-3: A non-sequitur, a frequent occurrence in the Koran (cf. vv. 49, 67). During the chanting of the Koran, such abrupt shifts convey the spontaneity and intensity of the sacred text.

V. 17: David, the slayer of Goliath, was "a man of strength." Vv. 18, 19: Nature praises God by the singing of birds, and David by playing the harp and reciting the Psalms. The mountains may represent the mighty of this world, and the birds — a tribe defeated by David. One can make numerous comparisons of this type, but they do not add much to the understanding of the Koran.

Vv. 21f: The story of the two litigants is an allegory based on the admonition of the Prophet Nathan to King David for appropriating Uria's wife while possessing numerous wives and concubines of his own (2 Samuel, 12: 1-4).

V. 24: The intruders disappeared as unexpectedly as they appeared, and David did not judge them. He repented when he realized that the allegory of the litigants was directed against his own misdeeds and that he was not qualified to lecture them.

V. 26: The Koran does not deal directly with the Biblical stories that cast doubt on David's moral character. The same can be said of Solomon: indeed, a Prophet has to inspire respect for himself and his preaching.

V. 29: This verse may refer either to David and the Psalms, or to the Prophet Muhammad and the Koran.

V. 31: "Highbred," lit., "strong on their legs, speedy."

V. 33: Solomon stroked the horses in recognition of the beauty of God's gifts — or slashed their legs to prove his detachment from material things. This passage is not in the Bible.

V. 34: A dead body — a Jinni, or a ghost.

V. 40: The same has been said about David in v. 25.

V. 44: "Take a wisp [of grass] in your hand and strike [your wife] with it." This verse can be understood in different ways.

To start with, it is logical to relate it to the story of Job. While God was testing Job by calamities, his wife advised him to curse God and die (Job, 2:9). Job probably swore that he

would punish her. God ordered Job to punish her leniently by slapping her with a bunch of grass to avoid breaking his oath. Another possible translation of the verse: "Take a wisp [of grass] in your hand, strike with it and don't sin" has a different meaning — God had pity for Job and ordered him to strike himself with a wisp of grass in order to alleviate his suffering (in Arabic, "to break an oath" and "to sin" are one and the same word, cf. S.56:46).

V. 46: "We purified them with purity," probably meaning "we chose them for a pure [purpose]."

V. 48: Ishmael, the elder son of Abraham, is the Patriarch of the Arab race.

V. 57: "Chilling beverages" or "pus." (S.78:25).

Vv. 62-63: The sinners talk about the Prophet and his followers, who obviously are not in Hell. The dwellers of Hell and Paradise will be able to see one another, cf. S.74:39-42.

SURA 27 THE ANTS. ***S.27 gives short versions of the stories of Moses (vv. 7-14), Salih (vv. 45-53), and Lot (vv. 54-58), the latter taken almost verbatim from an earlier sura. The centerpiece is the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (vv. 15-45) with the colorful episodes of the ants (v.18) and the birds (vv. 20-28). Arguments for monotheism, the Last Judgment, and the importance of God's Message to man are presented between the stories.***

27. THE ANTS

Meccan, 93 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ta sin.
These are some Verses from the Koran,
from the lucid Scripture.
2. This is Guidance and glad tidings for the believers,
3. for those who observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and firmly believe in the Hereafter.
4. As for those who disbelieve in the Hereafter,
We have embellished their deeds,
so that they wander in confusion.
5. An evil punishment is waiting for them —
they shall suffer the greatest loss in the Hereafter.

6. — [O Muhammad!] You are receiving the Koran
from the Wisest, the All-knowing.

7. Moses said to his family:
"I see a fire.
I'll fetch for you from it some news or a burning brand —
perhaps it'll help you to keep warm."
8* When he approached, a voice was heard:
— Blessed be the One, Who is in the fire and beside it,
and glory to God, the Lord of the Worlds!
9. O Moses! Verily, I am God, the Almighty, the Wisest.
10. Cast your staff down!
When [Moses] saw it crawling like a snake,

he ran away and refused to return.
— O Moses! Do not be afraid!
Verily, Messengers are not afraid in My Presence.
11* And if anyone of them does wrong
and then replaces evil by goodness,
I am the Forgiving, the Merciful.

12* Put your hand into your bosom —
it shall come out white, without harm.
This is one of the nine Signs for Pharaoh and his people,
indeed, these people are corrupt!
13. When Our eye-opening Signs reached them, they said:
"This is obvious magic!"
14. They rejected them out of iniquity and pride,
though deep inside they have been convinced by them.
Consider the fate of the corrupt!

15* We had given Knowledge to David and Solomon.
They said:
"Praise be to God, Who has elevated both of us
above many of His believing servants!"

16* Solomon was David's heir. He said:
"O people! We've been taught the language of birds
and we've been given all things.
Verily, this is a real favor!"
17. And Solomon's army of Jinn, men, and birds
was brought before him in ranks.
18. When they reached the valley of the ants, an ant said:
"O ants! Repair to your dwellings,
lest Solomon and his army unwittingly squash you."
19. [Solomon] laughed at its words and said with a smile:
"O my Lord! Inspire me to be thankful for all the favors
You showered upon me and my parents,
and for allowing me do the good works that please You.
Make me join by Your mercy
[the ranks] of Your righteous servants!"

20* He reviewed the birds and said:
"I don't see the lapwing. Why is he missing?
21. I'll punish him harshly, I'll even kill him,
if he comes to me without a convincing excuse."
22* But he did not tarry long, and, [flying in], said:
"I've surveyed [some lands] that you had not surveyed,
I come to you from Sheba with reliable news.
23. I found out that its ruler is a woman,
who received everything and owns a splendid throne.
24. And I found that she and her people
worship the sun instead of God.
Satan has embellished their deeds
and made them go astray — they have no Guidance.
25. They don't worship God,
Who reveals the secrets of Heavens and earth

and knows what you hide and what you reveal.
26. He is God, and there's no god but Him,
the Lord of the great Throne!"
27. [Solomon] said:
"Soon enough we'll see if you tell the truth or you lie.
28. Return to them with my letter and throw it to them,
then step aside and wait for their response."

29. [The Queen] said:
"O notables! An important letter has been delivered to me.
30. It's from Solomon:
'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
31* Don't make much of yourselves before me,
and come to me as Muslims.'"
32. And she said:
"O notables! Advise me in this matter,
indeed, I decide all affairs in your presence!"
33. [The notables] said:
"We're strong and experienced in ruthless war,
but you're the one who gives orders. What's your command?"
34. She said:
"When kings enter a town, they destroy it
and disgrace its most reputable dwellers —
that's what they do!
35. But I'll send them a gift and consider
what the envoys will bring back in return."

36* When they came before Solomon, he said:
"How can anything make me richer
if what God has given to me
is better than what He gave you?
Only you can rejoice at your gifts!
37. Go back to your [people]. We'll march against them
with armies that they will not be able to withstand.
We'll drive them from there in disgrace,
and they'll feel humiliated."

38. And he said:
"O Chiefs! Which of you will bring me her throne
before they come before me in submission?"
39* One of the Jinn, Ifreet, said:
"I'll bring it to you before you leave your place.
Believe me, I'm strong in such stunts!"
40. Someone who was versed in the Scripture said:
"I'll bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye!"
When [Solomon] saw [the throne] standing firmly before him,
he said:
"By the grace of my Lord, this is a test to see
if I'm grateful or ungrateful. To be grateful
is good for the soul, but to be ungrateful...
Verily, my Lord is generous and rich!"
41. And he said:
"Disguise her throne, and then we'll see

whether she follows the right way, or needs Guidance."
42* When she arrived, she was asked:
"Is this your throne?"
She said:
"It looks like mine! Knowledge came to us long ago,
and we've submitted ourselves to God."
43. And [Solomon] turned her away from
worshipping [other gods] besides God,
indeed, she belonged to a people without faith.
44* She was told:
"Enter the palace!" Seeing what she thought
was a pool of water, she bared her legs.
[Solomon] said:
"The palace is paved with glass."
She said:
"O my Lord! I have harmed my soul! Now, together with Solomon,
I surrender myself to God, the Lord of the Worlds."

45. We sent to [the people of] Thamood their brother Salih.
[He said]:
"Worship God!"
But they [split into] two disputing factions.
46. [Salih] said:
"O my People! Why do you hasten evil instead of virtue?
Ask God for forgiveness — perhaps He'll show you mercy!"
47. They said:
"Our birds have warned us against you
and those who are with you."
He said:
"Your birds are from God, and you're a people on trial!"

48. In the city there were nine people
who were spreading corruption in the land
and did not want to reform.
49* They said:
"Let's swear to one another by God
that we'll go at night after [Salih] and his kin.
Then, we'll tell his heir that we haven't witnessed
the murder of his family,
and that we're telling the truth!"
50. They plotted a scheme, and We plotted a scheme,
but they did not suspect [it].

51. Now, see the end of their plot:
— We wiped them out, with all their nation!
52. Their houses are now in ruins for the wrong they did.
Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who know!
53. And We saved those who believed and who feared [God].

54. And Lot... He said to his people:
"Don't you realize that you're committing indecency!
55. Don't you lust after men instead of women?
Yes, you're an ignorant people!"

56. But his people had only one answer:
"Expel Lot's family from our city —
these people insist on staying pure!"
57. We rescued him and his family,
except his wife — We decided to leave her behind.
58. And We pelted them with rain:
fatal was that rain for those who were warned!

59. Say:
"Praise to God and peace upon the servants He chose!
Who is better, God or those you associate [with Him]?"
60. Has He not created the Heavens and earth
and sent you down from the sky
the water We use to grow luxuriant gardens?
Are you able to grow such trees by yourselves?
So, is there a god besides God?
But these people refuse to commit themselves.

61. Has He not made the earth firm,
and traced riverbeds, and raised mountains upon it,
and set up a barrier between the two seas?
So, is there a god besides God?
But most of them do not know [it].
62* Does He not answer the call of [a man] in distress,
who calls to Him, does He not relieve his pain?
[Did He not] appoint you heirs to the land?
So, is there a god besides God?
How little do you remember!
63. Does He not guide you through the darkness of land and sea,
and send winds as forerunners of His mercy!
So, is there a god besides God?
Exalted is God above whatever they associate with Him!
64. Does He not begin the Creation, then repeat it
and give provisions from the sky and the earth?
So, is there a god besides God?
Say:
"Bring forth your Proof if you're telling the truth!"

65. Say:
"Nobody but God knows the Unseen in Heavens and earth,
and nobody knows when he will be raised."
66. Yes, little do they know about the Hereafter,
and, moreover, they are in doubt about it.
How blind they are in this matter!

67. The disbelievers say:
"Shall we really be raised
after we and our fathers turned to dust?
68. This has been promised to us and to our fathers before us,
yet, these are just some fables of the Ancients!"
69. Say [to the disbelievers]:
"Go through the land
and see what was the end of the sinners!"

70. — [O Muhammad!] Do not grieve over them
and do not worry about their plots!
71. They say:
"When will the promise come true
if you're telling the truth!"
72. Say:
"Maybe a part of what you'd like to hasten
is already catching on you!"
73. Verily, your Lord is full of mercy for mankind,
but most of them are ungrateful.
74. Verily, Your Lord knows
what they hide in their hearts and what they reveal.
75. There is nothing hidden in Heaven and earth
that is not in the lucid Book.
76. Verily, this Koran enlightens the Children of Israel
about most of the matters in their dissensions.
77. Verily, it is a Guidance and a mercy for the believers.
78. Verily, your Lord will rule between them in His Judgment —
He is the Mighty, the Knowing.
79. So, trust God — indeed, you are facing the manifest Truth!

80. Verily, you cannot make the dead listen,
as you cannot make the deaf hear your call
if they run away [from you].
81. And you cannot pull the blind out of their error!
Only those who believe in Our Signs will hear you:
they are the Muslims!

82* When Our Word is fulfilled,
We will summon a Beast from the earth — let it talk to them!
Indeed, Our Signs have not convinced these people!

83. On that Day We will gather from each nation
a crowd of those who deny Our Signs
and they shall be sorted out.
84. When they come, [God] will say:
— Have you rejected My Signs out of ignorance
or because of what you have done?
85. The Word against them shall be fulfilled
because of their wrong-doing,
and they shall not be able to respond!
86. Don't they see that We gave them the night to rest
and the day to have light?
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who believe!

87. On the Day when a blast on the trumpet is sounded,
everybody in Heavens and on earth shall be terrified;
they shall come before God in abjection,
except those He will want [to save].
88. And you will see the mountains
that you thought immovable, move like clouds.
Such are the works of God,

Who has brought everything to perfection.
Verily, He is aware of your deeds!
89. Goodness shall accrue to those who do good
and they shall be saved from the terror of that Day.
90. But whoever comes forward with bad [deeds]
shall be cast face down into the Fire:
— Is there any other reward for you,
except what you have done yourselves?

91. [Say:]
"I've been ordered to worship the Lord of this city
that He has sanctified — indeed, all things belong to Him!
I'm ordered to be a Muslim
92. and to recite the Koran."
Those who accept Guidance, do it for their souls.
Say to the one in error:
"I'm just a Warner."
93. And say:
"Praised be God!
Soon He'll show you His Signs and you'll recognize them!
Your Lord is not heedless of anything you do!"

V. 8: The fire may emanate from Angels. "Who is in the fire and beside it" or "who goes to God or is looking for Him."

V. 11: Predestination can be mitigated only by God's mercy and forgiveness (S.81:29).

V. 12: Moses's hand was luminous, but not leprous as in the Biblical story (S.7:108).

V. 16: All living things know God and praise Him. Cf.: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise" (Prov. 6:6).

V. 20: The lapwing, **hudhud** in Arabic.

V. 22: Sheba (**Saba'**) was a locality in Southern Arabia, ruled by a Queen called Bilqis. (Cf. 1 Kings 10:1-10).

V. 31: "As Muslims," or "like those who surrendered to God."

Surrendering to God is only the first step on God's path. True Islam (**islam**) consists in offering one's whole life to God and doing good deeds, without which faith (**iman**) is not possible.

Faith includes Knowledge (**'ilm** or **ma'rifa**), charity (**ihsan**), and sincerity (**ikhlas**). The latter includes the repudiation of the association (**shirk**) of idols to God and ihsan includes belief in one God, purity, as well as goodness, beauty, and the pursuit of the ideals expressed in God's names. One of God's names is the Grateful (**ash-Shakur**); if God is the Grateful, then an ungrateful man is the lowest of the lowest (S.27: 40; S. 100:6).

Disbelief or unbelief (**kufr**) is the rejection of Truth, and therefore of God (God is the Truth) and His Koran (the Word of Truth). Disbelieving is concealing God from oneself and others. Faith is based on accepting the Koran, the teaching of scholars, and mystical communication with God. Total immersion in Islam (**taqawa**) comprises fear of God and obedience to Him. "Devout" and "righteous" are too weak to convey the full meaning of this word.

Knowledge and understanding are the cornerstones of Islam. Neither the belief in a trinity nor solemn rites nor the cult of saints distracts the faithful from direct contact with the Creator.

V. 36: It was more important for Solomon to bring the people of Sheba into Islam than to receive their gifts.

V. 39: **Ifreet** is a wicked spirit. Solomon prefers the spiritual power of a believer to the sorcery of an evil imp.

Vv. 42-43: These verses can be rendered differently, viz., she said: "It looks like mine!" [Solomon said]: Knowledge has come to us long ago, and we've submitted ourselves to God," and he turned her away from worshipping [other gods] besides God...

V. 44: If the glass floor symbolizes the Truth, then the Queen's hesitation speaks of the weakness of her faith.

V. 49: The stratagem of Salih's enemies was aimed at avoiding the retaliation of his nearest relative. Revenge for murder was a duty that could lead to the decimation of entire families. Islam offered repentance and pardon as alternatives to the Biblical injunction, "an eye for an eye, a life for a life."

V. 62: This call to God is the private prayer of S.40:60.

V. 82: "Speak" or "wound." Here the "Beast" is a metaphor for unbelief, cf. Rev. 13:1f.

SURA 34 SHEBA. ***S.34 requires much concentration on the part of the reader. In vv. 10-18, there are two unconnected stories about David and Solomon and the queen of Sheba. The text consists of early and late exhortations and "Say passages." The main themes are the Day of Judgment and the uniqueness of God. Their meaning is better grasped by a deeply religious person whose eyes have been unveiled, and whose mind has been opened to Knowledge. Striking comparisons illustrate the nature of man and his relation to God.***

34. S H E B A

Meccan, 54 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Praised be God, the Owner of everything
in Heavens and earth! Praise be to Him in the Hereafter!
He is the Wise, the All-Knowing.

2. He knows what seeps down into the earth
and what comes out of it,
what descends from the sky and what ascends to it.
He is the Merciful, the Forgiving.

3. The disbelievers say:
"The Hour will never come for us!"
Say:
"By my Lord, it will certainly come!
[God] knows the Unseen, and nothing in Heaven or on earth
can be hidden from Him, even the lightest particle.
There's nothing smaller or bigger than it
that isn't recorded in the lucid Book.

4* This is to reward those who believed and did right:
there's forgiveness for them and a generous sustenance."
5. Those who work against Our Signs
and strive to subvert them
shall receive a painful retribution.
6. Those who have received the Knowledge sent down to you
from your Lord perceive in it the Truth that guides
on the path of the Almighty, the Praise-Worthy.

7* The disbelievers say:
"Shall We show you a man who says
that after you're scattered like dust,
you'll become a new Creation?
8* Is he slandering God or is he possessed?"
Yes! A penalty is looming upon those
who do not believe in the Hereafter and are far astray.
9. Do they not see the sky and the earth
before them and behind them?
If We wished, We could make the earth swallow them,
or We could drop upon them a piece of the sky.
Verily, there is a Sign in this
for every servant turning [to God].

10. We have bestowed Our Grace upon David:
— O mountains, sing praises with him, and you, o birds!
We made iron soft for him:
11. — Make [coats of mail] and adjust the armor!
Do good works, for I see everything you do!

12* And to Solomon [We have given] the wind
that [covers] a month's [journey] in the morning
and a month's in the evening.
We gave him a fountain of molten brass.
Some Jinn worked for him by permission of his Lord.
If anyone of them disobeyed Our command,
We made him taste the punishment of the Fire.
13. They made whatever he desired:
altars, adornments, bowls like cisterns,
and cauldrons too heavy to move.
— O family of David! Toil and be grateful!
But so few are grateful among My servants!

14* When We decreed his death,
nothing signalled his passing away,
except a creature from the soil,
which had been gnawing at his staff.
When [the staff] collapsed, the Jinn understood
that had they known the Unseen,
they would not have suffered a humiliating punishment.

15* The dwellers of Sheba had a Sign: two gardens,
one to the right and one to the left.
— Eat of what your Lord provides you with

and be grateful to Him:
indeed, fertile is this land and forgiving is your Lord!
16* But they turned away,
and We sent upon them a flood
that even dams [failed to contain].
We replaced their gardens
by two gardens with bitter fruit,
tamarisks, and a few thorny [trees].

17* Such was Our reward for their disbelief —
indeed, We punish only the disbelievers!

18. Between them and the towns We had blessed
We have placed [a few] prominent towns,
and We measured the roads between them.
— Travel on them safely by night and by day!
19* But they said:
"O our Lord!
Increase the distances between our stations!"
By doing so they wronged themselves.
We left of them nothing but memories,
and We scattered them to all winds.
Verily, there are Signs in this
for the patient and grateful!

20* What Iblis had planned for them proved to be true:
they all followed him, except a few believers
21* over whom he had no authority.
Indeed, We discern the one who believes in the Hereafter
from the one who has doubts about it.
Your Lord keeps guard over everything!

22. Say:
"You can call upon [those]
whom you recognize besides God,
but even the lightest particle in Heavens and earth
is not under their control.
They have no part in that
and [God] has no helper among them."

23* Intercession before Him would not help anyone,
except those who get His permission.
After their hearts recover from fright, they shall say:
"What did your Lord say?"
[The Angels] shall say:
"The Truth! He is the Highest, the Greatest."
24. Say:
"Who gives you sustenance from Heavens and earth?"
Say:
"God! It's as obvious as [the truth]
that some of us are on the right way,
and the others in manifest error."

25. Say:
"You shall not be asked about our sins,
and we shall not be asked about your deeds."

26. Say:
"Our Lord will bring us together,
and He will judge between us in Truth.
He is the Judge, the All-Knowing."
27. Say:
"Show me the partners you've associated with Him.
But no! He's God, the Almighty, the Wise."

28* We have sent you to all the people
as a Carrier of good news and a Warner,
but most people do not know [it].
29. They say:
"When will this promise come true
if you're telling the truth?"
30. Say:
"There is a Day appointed for you
that you can neither postpone nor advance by one hour."
31. The disbelievers say:
"We'll believe neither in this Koran
nor in whatever came before it."

If you could only see the sinners accusing one another
as they are lined up before their Lord!
The submissive shall say to the arrogant:
"Had it not been for you, we would've surely believed!"
32. The arrogant shall say to the submissive:
"Have we turned you away from the Guidance
when it came to you? No, you were the transgressors!"
33. The submissive shall say to the arrogant:
"Not at all, it was you who plotted night and day,
pressuring us to disbelieve in God
and to associate others to Him!"
But they will strongly repent
when they see their punishment!
We will put shackles 'round the disbelievers' necks
in retribution for their deeds!.

34. Each time We sent a Warner to a town,
the wealthy said:
"We reject what you're sent with."
35. And they said:
"We're superior in wealth and in sons,
therefore, we cannot be punished!"
36. Say:
"Verily, my Lord increases or reduces
the provision to anyone He wills,
but most people don't know [it]."

37. Neither your possessions nor your sons
will bring you closer to Us.
But those who believed and did good works
shall receive a double reward for their deeds
and shall dwell in peace in [lofty] Chambers.
38. And those who vilify Our Signs
shall be dragged off to punishment.
39. Say:
"Verily, My Lord increases or decreases the provision
to those He wills among His servants.
He will compensate you for everything you give away —
indeed, He's the best of providers!"
40. On that Day He will gather them all together
and say to the Angels:
— Is it not you that they worshiped?
41. [The Angels] shall say:
"Glory to You! You're our Protector, not they!
No! They worshiped the Jinn —
indeed, most of them believed in them!"
42. But on that Day, nobody shall be able to help
or to harm anyone else.
We shall say to the sinners:
— Taste of the punishment by the Fire you used to deny!

43. When Our clear Verses are read to them, they say:
"He's just a man who wants to seduce you away
from what your fathers used to worship."
They say:
"These are just fabrications and deceptions!"
And when the Truth comes to them,
the disbelievers say:
"This's just obvious magic!"
44* We had not given them any Books to study,
and We had not sent to them any Warner before you.
45* They have not received even the tenth part
of what we had given to their predecessors.
Yet, when [the latter] rejected My Messengers,
how [terrible] was My condemnation!
46. Say:
"I'm asking you only one thing:
to stand before God singly or in pairs
and to consider that your companion isn't possessed.
He's just warning you of the forecoming stern punishment!"
47. Say:
"I'm not asking you for a reward — keep it for yourselves.
My reward is only with God, the Witness to everything!"

48. Say:
"Verily, my Lord conquers by the Truth,
and He knows the Unseen."
49. Say:
"When the Truth comes,
falsehood won't appear and won't return!"

50. Say:
"If I'm in error, I'm in error to my detriment,
but if I accept Guidance,
it's by inspiration from my Lord —
verily, He's hearing, He's close by!"

51* If you could only see how they will tremble
when they will find no way to escape
and will be seized from a place close by!
52. They will say:
"We do believe in Him!"
But how will they be able to return from a place far away?

53. They used to deny Him before,
and they slandered the Unseen from a place far away!
54* But there is a barrier between them and their wishes.
And so it was in the past with their supporters
who also dwelled in oppressive doubt!

Vv. 4-5: Man will be rewarded for his good deeds and punished for his transgressions. Clearly, predestination depends on how he discharges his own responsibility.

V. 7: "A new Creation" or "in a new Creation."

V. 8: "[Possessed] by a Jinni" — **majnoon**, meaning "crazy."

V. 14: Unaware of the purpose of their work, the Jinn took work for punishment. They saw that the staff was weakened, but being spiritually blind, they did not foresee its collapse. Spiritual blindness is what made Iblis and his kind repudiate Adam: they saw him in his flesh and not in his spirit.

V. 15: Not much is known about the dwellers of Sheba or Saba.

They apparently came from Mesopotamia with the Patriarch Abraham. While Abraham and his son Ishmael stayed in Mecca, the sons of Ishmael moved South to Yemen. There, their successors are supposed to have founded the dynasty of Himyarites which ruled over the kingdom of Saba.

V. 16: "A flood that even dams [failed to contain]," or "the flood of 'Irim," if 'Irim is the name of a locality. This could be the dam of **Ma'rib** (its ruins still stand in southern Arabia).

The two gardens remind the duality expressed in S.55 and the destruction of two gardens in S.18:32-34.

The "thorny [trees]" — "lotetrees," growing in the Middle East (the crown of Jesus at his trial was made of twigs from this tree).

V. 17: There are three degrees of disbelief: denial of God, association of idols with God, and ungratitude to God.

V. 19: Apparently, they tried to increase their territory at the expense of their neighbors.

V. 20: Iblis seduces people without much effort since people are light-minded and prone to do evil.

V. 21: "Your Lord keeps guard over all things" (cf. vv. 28 and 36). Such phrases do reinforce the rhyme, but they are far from being void of content: they are introduced for rhetorical and stylistic purposes to enhance the emotional appeal of the chanted text. When repeated in a haunting tone, they sound like an impetuous refrain and help connect the verses together rather

than separate them. Without them, many suras would seem flat, lifeless, even purposeless (cf. S.26:21). All the words in the Koran contribute to its clarity and expression.

The most sublime form of poetry is the praise of God, the communication with the holy. With this definition of poetry, one can say that the Koran is poetry of the most elevated kind. A good translation treats the Koran with respect, but it does not convert it into a simulacrum of poetry by introducing rhythms and rimes that are alien to the Arabic language and by carving the text into unnatural lines that do not correspond to the Arabic spirit. One can foresee a serious problem if attempts are made at an artistic chanting of the Koran in English.

V. 23: The words of the righteous may belong to the Angels, and those of the Angels, — to the righteous.

V. 33: "They will strongly repent" or, according to a another translation: "they will conceal their repentance.

V. 44: The Prophet Muhammad was the first Messenger to bring a Scripture to the Arab people.

V. 45: The people of Saba, Thamood and 'Ad belonged to "the People of the Scripture." They received many gifts from God, and yet, they rejected Him. Muhammad's contemporaries, the Quraishites, were idolaters and, therefore, were receiving fewer gifts from God.

Vv. 51, 53: A "place close by" or "a place far away" denote degrees of nearness to God; however, there is no compromise in faith, and all those who distance themselves from God are guilty to the same extent.

Those who "will tremble when they will have no way to escape" are either the transgressors in general or the enemies of the Prophet in particular.

V. 54: Two ideas are combined here: how goodness will overcome evil and how Islam will overcome the confederation of enemies.

IV. Attitude Toward the Other Religions

Sura 25 Salvation. ***S. 25 supports the Prophet Muhammad and warns the idolaters and the disbelievers of their punishment. It is made mostly of Warning and Sign passages and it ends with a lengthy glorification of God (vv. 45f) and some uplifting words for the believers (vv. 63-76). The comforting tone of this sura is enhanced by the frequent occurrence of God's names "the Compassionate" and "the Forgiving." Occasionally, this sura is called "the Koran."***

25. S A L V A T I O N

Meccan, 77 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Blessed is the One, Who sent Salvation to His servant,
making it a Warning to the Worlds.

2. The Sovereign of Heavens and earth
has not taken a son for Himself,
and He has no partner in His Dominion.
He has created all things and proportioned them well.
3. Yet you have taken to some gods besides Him
who didn't create anything
and have been created themselves.
They can neither hurt nor benefit themselves,
They have no control over death, life, and resurrection.

4* The disbelievers say:
"It's just a fabrication he has contrived
with the help of other people."
But ***they*** are the ones who brought out evil and falsehood!
5. They also say:
"These are tales of the old, written at his request,
that are read to him mornings and evenings."
6. Say:

"[The Koran] has been sent down by the One,
Who knows the secret of Heavens and earth.
Verily, He's forgiving and merciful!"
7. They say:
"What kind of a Messenger is he,
if he eats food and walks the markets?
And why wasn't an Angel
sent down to join him in warning?

8. [Why] wasn't he given a treasure or a garden,
which would've fed him?"
The wrong-doers [also] say:
"The one you follow is nothing but a man bewitched!"
9. See, to whom they are comparing you!
They have gone astray and cannot find a way out!

10* Blessed be the One, Who, if He willed, could give you
something better — gardens under which the rivers flow,
or build castles for you!
11. But no, they deny the Hour [of Judgment], and for those
who deny the Hour We have prepared a blazing Fire.
12. When it spots them from afar,
they will hear its raging howl.
13. They shall be thrown into it, chained together,
in a narrow space where they will wish to die.
14* On that Day, you will wish to die not only once,
you will wish to die several times!
15* Say:
"Is this better than the eternal Garden
promised to the God-fearing,
which is going to be their reward and destination?
16. They'll receive there whatever they wish;
they'll abide there for ever,
as your Lord has promised them
in response to their prayers."
17. On the Day He gathers them together with those
they have been serving besides God, He will say to them:
— Are you the ones who led My servants astray,
or they have lost their way themselves?
18. They shall say: "Glory to You!
We shouldn't have taken protectors besides You!
But you allowed their fathers to enjoy [life] for so long
that they forgot the Warning and became a lost people."
19. — Now that it became clear that your words are lies,
you will not be able to avert [punishment] nor receive help.
To those of you who committed evil,
We will give a taste of the great punishment.
20* We had never sent Messengers before you
who would not eat food and walk the markets.
Of some of you We made a test for the others,
but will you have enough patience?
Indeed, your Lord sees [everything]!

21. Those who do not hope to meet with Us, say:
"If only Angels had been sent down to us,
or if we could see our Lord [with our own eyes]!"
They are so swollen with pride
that they have rebelled in a great rebellion!
22* The Day they see the Angels, that Day shall not be
good news for the sinners. [The Angels] shall say:
"You're facing a barrier you won't be able to surmount!"
23. Then We will consider their deeds
and scatter them like dust!

24. But on that Day, the dwellers of the Garden
shall be in the best abode, the best resting place.
25* On that Day the sky and the clouds shall be rent asunder,
and the Angels shall descend in ranks.
26. On that Day the Dominion of Truth
shall belong to the Compassionate.
Harsh shall be that Day for the disbelievers!
27* On that Day the wrong-doer shall bite his hands and say:
"Oh, woe to me! It would've been better
if I had followed the way of the Messenger!
28. Oh, woe to me! If had never had such a friend!
29. When the Warning came to me, Satan led me astray.
Surely he is a traitor to man!"
30. And the Messenger shall say: "O my Lord!
My people have indeed taken this Koran for nonsense!"
31. Thus to every Prophet We gave a foe from among the sinners;
but sufficient is your Lord as a Guide and a Helper!

32. The disbelievers say:
"Why wasn't the Koran revealed to him in its entirety?"
— We have recited it in stages to brace your heart.
33. No sooner they ask you a question
that We bring you the Truth and its best explanation.
34. And those who will be dragged face down to Hellfire
shall be in the worst place and the deepest delusion.

35* We have sent the Scripture to Moses
and made his brother, Aaron, his assistant.
36. We said:
— Go to the people who rejected Our Signs!
Later on We exterminated them completely.

37. After the people of Noah had rejected the Messengers,
We drowned them all and made of them a Sign for mankind.
We have prepared a painful punishment for the sinners,
38* and also for 'Ad, Thamood, the dwellers of Ar-rass,
and many intervening generations.
39. We had taught each of them by examples,
and then We utterly destroyed all of them.

40* And now, as they are passing by their town
that had been pelted by an evil rain,

do they not notice anything?
No! They do not dread the Resurrection!
41. — [O Muhammad!] As soon as they see you,
you become the object of their derision:
"Is he the one that God has sent to us as a Messenger?
42. He would have surely separated us from our gods
if we hadn't held fast unto them!"
But at the sight of the punishment they shall know
who is the farthest astray!
43. Have you seen the one who worships his passion?
Would you be his guarantor?
44. Do you think that most of them can listen and understand?
No! They are like cattle, only farther astray!

45. Do you not see how your Lord lengthens a shadow?
Had He willed it, He would have made it stationary.
We allow the sun to regulate it,
46. and then We gradually pull it to Ourselves.

47. He is the One, Who made for you the night as a cover,
the sleep to rest, and the day to be awake.
48. He is the One, Who sends you the winds
as messengers of the good tidings of His mercy.
We are sending you pure water from the sky
49. to let it revive the dead land and quench the thirst
of Our creatures — a multitude of cattle and men.
50. We distribute it among them to let them remember [Us],
yet most people reject everything, except disbelief!
51. Had We willed it,
We would have sent a Warner to each town.
52. So, do not give in to the disbelievers,
but fight a big fight against them!
53. He is the One, Who let two bodies of water flow freely:
one pleasant and sweet, the other one salty and bitter.
He separated them by a dam, a forbidding barrier.
54. He is the One, Who has created man from water
and instituted the ties of blood and marriage,
for mighty is your Lord!
55. Yet, besides God, they worship
what can neither help nor harm them.
A disbeliever is a helper against his Lord!
56. We have sent you only as a Herald and a Warner.
57. Say:
"I'm not asking you for a fee,
I only want anyone who wills to take the path to his Lord!"

58. Put your trust in the One,
Who lives and does not die, and glorify Him!
Sufficient is He to know the sins of His servants.
59. He is the One, Who has created in six days
the Heavens and the earth, and what is in between,
and then established Himself on the Throne.
He is the Compassionate. Ask about Him anyone who knows!

60* They have been told:
"Bow to the Compassionate!"
Yet they say:
"And who is the Compassionate?
Why should we bow to anyone at your command?"
And it further increases their aversion!
61. Blessed be the One, Who has set constellations in the sky
and has placed in it a light and a shining moon.
62. He is the One, Who alternates night and day for those
who wish to remember, for those who wish to be thankful.
63. The servants of the Compassionate are those
who walk modestly upon the earth
and say: "Peace!" to the ignorant who address them.
64. They spend nights before their Lord, standing or bowing.
65. They say:
"Our Lord! Divert from us the punishment of Hellfire,
for such a punishment is a torment that never ends!
66. It's a terrible abode and resting place."
67. They are not profligate or stingy, but keep to the middle.
68. They do not call to other gods besides God.
They kill a soul guilty of murder only for a just cause,
and they do not commit fornication.
Whoever acts otherwise shall be punished,
69. and his punishment shall be doubled On Resurrection Day —
he shall be humiliated for ever,
70* unless he repents, believes, and does righteous works.
Then God will replace his bad deeds by good ones —
indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

71. Those who repent and do right,
who repent to God in sincere repentance,
72. who do not give false testimony,
who pass by idle talk with dignity,
73. who, when reminded of the Signs of their Lord,
do not lose attention, as if they were deaf and blind,
74. but say:
"O our Lord! Give us wives and offspring who will comfort
our eyes. Make of us an example for the God-fearing."
75. They are the ones who, for their patience,
shall be rewarded with the highest abode.
There they shall be met with welcome and peace
76. and they shall stay therein for ever.
What a good dwelling and resting place!
77. Say [to the disbelievers]:
"It makes no difference to my Lord
if you pray or do not pray to Him.
But if you've rejected [Him],
the Inevitable shall soon come [upon you]!"

V. 1: "Salvation" **(furqan)** is "discernment between evil and good." It has several other meanings — deliverance, illumination, inerrant judgment, spiritual Knowledge, or the Koran itself.

V. 4: The disbelievers accuse the Prophet of plagiarism and hint at his presumed illiteracy, but he does not contradict them. V. 10: "Gardens under which the rivers flow" — running water represents movement, life, renewal, and purity. According to legend, when Agar with her son Ishmael was chased to the desert by the wife of Abraham, Sarah, **Zamzam**, a spring with curative waters, sprung at her feet. According to another legend, when Mary gave birth to Jesus, a spring flowed beneath her. Water also appeared under the feet of Job (S.38:42). The Koran repeatedly refers to rivers flowing in Paradise under houses and gardens.

V. 14: "You will wish to die numerous times" or "will wish the death of the many." The sinners want to die, but in vain.

V. 15: The word "reward" is often a figure of speech. The reward of the righteous is in their righteousness.

V. 20: "Will you have [enough] patience?" — the same question was addressed to Moses by the wise man (S.18:67).

V. 22: "The impassable barrier" — it could be their past.

V. 25: The sky and the clouds limit visibility. They must be rent asunder to allow the spiritual eye to focus on the infinite and to understand the mystery of the Universe. The mention of the battle of Badr (2 H) is probably a late addition.

V. 33: According to this verse, God has been anticipating the questions that would be asked by the readers of the Koran and He provided them with the appropriate answers.

V. 35: "His assistant" or "his Vizier."

V. 38: Ar-rass was already mentioned in S.50:12.

V. 50: "We distribute it among them" (*it* is water), or "We distribute [the Reminder] among them" in agreement with v. 52: "fight [with the Reminder] a big fight against them."

V. 40: The evil rain is taken from the story of Lot.

V. 60: The confusion about the Compassionate **(ar-Rahman)** may have been due to the existence of a pre-Islamic god by this name.

V. 70: In His compassion, God is willing to pardon the disbelievers, provided they mend their ways.

SURA 3(I) THE HOUSE OF 'IMRAN.

Starting with this sura, the pace and the content of the Koranic verses undergo some changes. A part of S.3 is an appraisal of the situation at the time when the Prophet was well established in Medina, but had to fight hostile factions besieging the city. Among them were the leaders of Mecca who were defeated at Badr and the Jewish tribes that supported them.

The House of Imran for which S.3 is named is the family of Jesus. The first half of S.3 (vv. 1-109) deals with the attitude of the Muslims towards Judaism and Christianity. In the second half (vv. 110-200) it deals with the military actions of Islam, and thus belongs to Part VII. The Fight in the Cause of God.

Such a division of S.3 sura into two parts is appropriate and reasonable. The Holy Book itself recommends to use reason in the interpretation of the Koran. In v. 7 it states that the Verses are either didactic or allegorical. The first ones are "the essence of the Book" and are meant to teach people, whereas the interpretation of allegorical Verses can lead to dissent because man cannot understand what is accessible only to God.

In S.3(I) a short invocation is followed by 1) a medley of Warning, Sign and Say passages (vv. 2-32); 2) the story of Mary and Jesus (vv. 33-61); 3) a section on Abraham, the progenitor of the Arabs (vv. 65-68); 4) some Warnings to the Jews (vv. 69-84); and 5) some Warnings to the non-committed Muslims (vv. 85-109).

3. *THE HOUSE OF 'IMRAN*

Medinan, 200 verses

Part I. (Vv. 1-109)

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim.
2. God! There is no god besides Him,
He is the Living, the Self-Existing!

3* He has sent down to you the Scripture with the Truth,
confirming what had been sent before it.
Earlier He had sent the Torah and the Evangel
as a Guidance for the people.
And He had sent down the Salvation.

4. Verily, those who reject the Signs of God
shall receive a severe punishment —
God is mighty and vengeful!

5. Verily, nothing is hidden from God on earth or in Heaven.
6. He is the One, Who forms you in the wombs, as He wills.
There is no god but Him, the Mighty, the Wise.
7* He is the One, Who has sent down to you
the Scripture with prescriptive Verses,
which are the essence of the Book.
There are other, allegorical ones.
Those with impure hearts follow the allegorical [Verses],
interpreting them and thus inciting dissent.
But their meaning is known only to God!

The steadfast in Knowledge say:
"We believe in [the Scripture] —
it's entirely from our Lord,
but only those with insight remember [it].
8. "O our Lord!
Don't let our hearts go astray after You've guided us,
and provide us from Your mercy — verily, You're the Giver.
9. O our Lord!
You will round up the people
on that Day about which there's no doubt.
Verily, God will never fail [His] promise!"

10. Neither their wealth nor their children
shall protect the disbelievers from God.
They are no more than fuel for the Fire!

11. They are not better than the house of Pharaoh
and those who were before them.
They denied Our Signs, and God seized them for their sins,
for God is stern in punishment.

12. Say to the disbelievers:
"You shall soon be overthrown and gathered in Hell —
evil will be this bedding!"
13* You've already been given a Sign
in the clash between the two armies:
one fought in the cause of God, the other — against it.
Then the enemies saw with their eyes
twice as many [Muslims] as they actually were.
Thus God supports by His help those He wills —
verily, there is a lesson in this for those who can see.

14. People are consumed by passions for women and sons,
for hoarded kintars of gold and silver,
for branded horses, for cattle, and for cultivated fields,
but these are only some enjoyments of the present life —
the best calling is nearness to God.

15* Say:
"Shall I tell you what's better for the God-fearing?
It's nearness to their Lord in Gardens
under which the rivers flow.
By the Grace of God, they shall stay there for ever
with their pure spouses. God is observing [His] servants
16. who say:
'O our Lord! We've truly believed! Forgive us our sins
and save us from the punishment by the Fire.'
17. But this is only for the patient and the truthful,
the devout and the generous
who pray for forgiveness from early morning."

18. There is no god but Him!
This is witnessed by God and the Angels,
and those who possess Knowledge and uphold justice.
There is no god but Him, the Mighty, the Wise.
19* Verily, in God's sight, religion is Islam!
After receiving Knowledge, the People of the Scripture
dissented from it out of enmity to one another.
But for those who reject the Signs of God,
God is quick to settle the account!
20. If they start arguing with you, say:
"I've totally submitted myself to God,
and so have those who followed me."
Tell the People of the Scripture and the unenlightened ones:
"Have you submitted yourselves [to God]?"
If they have submitted themselves,
they are on the right path, but if they have turned away,
then your duty is to convey [the Message].
God is observant of [His] servants!

21. Verily, announce a painful punishment
to those who reject the Signs of God,
wrongfully slay the Prophets,
and kill the people who call to justice.
22. Their works shall amount to nothing
both in this world and the Hereafter,
and nobody shall help them!

23. Do you not see those
who have received a portion of the Scripture?
When called to judgment by the Divine Scripture,
some of them refuse to comply and turn away.
24. They say:
"If the Fire touched us, it would be only for a few days."
By their lies about religion they deceive only themselves!

25. And what will happen when We gather them on the Day,
which cannot be doubted, when each soul
shall be paid in full for what she has deserved?
26. Say:
"O God! O Lord of Sovereignty!
You give power to whom You will
and withdraw it from whom You will.
You exalt whom You will
and abase whom You will.
All goodness is in Your hand
and you've power over everything!
27* You allow the night to catch up the day
and the day to catch up the night.
You bring forth the living from the dead
and the dead from the living.
You provide without reckoning for everyone You will."

28* Do not let the believers befriend disbelievers
in preference to believers, except for safety,
otherwise, God will not help them.
God cautions you against Himself,
indeed, to God is [your] return!

29. Say: "God knows what you conceal in your souls
and what you reveal.
He knows everything in Heavens and earth —
indeed, God has power over all things!

30. On that Day, every soul shall be confronted
with all the good she has done
and all the evil she has done.
Then she will wish [evil] to depart from her far away.
God cautions you against Himself,
but God is full of good will for [His] servants!

31. Say:
"Follow me if you love God,
then God will love you and forgive your sins,
for God is forgiving and merciful!"
32. Say:
"Obey God and the Messenger!"
But if they turn around,
then, verily, God doesn't love the disbelievers!

33. God chose Adam and Noah, the house of Abraham,
and the house of 'Imran over all the people of the world —
34. all in the same line of descent.
God is hearing and knowing!

35* The wife of 'Imran said:
"O my Lord! I dedicate to You what's in my womb
to freely [serve You].
Accept it from me, for you're the Hearing, the Knowing."
36. After delivery she said:
"O my Lord! I've delivered a girl!"
But God knew well whom she had delivered,
the male being unlike the female.
[She said]:
"I named her Mary. I'm putting her and her progeny
under Your protection from Satan, the stoned one."

37* God gave her a gracious reception,
provided her with good upbringing,
and entrusted her to Zechariah.
Each time he entered [her] sanctuary,
he found some provisions with her and said:
"O Mary! Where does it come from?"
She said:
"It's from God,
for God provides without reckoning anyone He wills!"
38. Calling from there to his Lord, Zechariah said:
"O my Lord! Give me a good progeny from Yourself,
indeed, You listen to prayers!"
39. As he was praying in the sanctuary,
the Angels announced to him:
"Confirming the Truth of the Word of God,
God brings to you the good tidings
of the [birth of your son] John,
an abstinent Prophet among the righteous!"
40. [Zechariah] said:
"O my Lord! How can I have a son
if I've reached old age and my wife is barren?"
[God] said:
— God does what He wills!
41. [Zechariah] said:
"O my Lord! Give me a Sign!"
[God] said:
— Your Sign is that for three days

you shall communicate with people only by signs.
Remember your Lord oftentimes
and glorify [Him] evenings and mornings.
42. The Angels said:
"O Mary! God has selected you, purified you,
and put you above the women of the Worlds.
43. O Mary! Worship your Lord, prostrate yourself,
and bow with those who bow!"

44* This is one of the events of the Unseen
that We are inspiring you with.
You were not with them when they cast writing reeds,
[divining] who will take charge of Mary,
and you were not with them
when they argued among themselves.

45* The Angels said:
"O Mary! God announces to you the glad tidings
of the Word from Himself,
whose name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary.
[He]'ll be revered in [this] world and in the Hereafter
as one of the nearest [to God].
46* He shall speak to the people from his crib and in maturity,
and he will be one of the upright."
47* [Mary] said:
"O my Lord! How can I have a child
if I haven't been touched by a man?"
[God] said:
— God creates what He wills.
When He rules upon some matter,
He says to it: — Be! And there it is!

48. [God] will teach him the Scripture and the Wisdom,
the Torah and the Evangel,
49* and he will be a Messenger to the Children of Israel.
[And Jesus will say]:
'I'm coming to you with a Sign from your Lord.
I'll shape for you the likeness of a bird from clay,
then I'll breathe into it,
and with God's permission it'll become a bird.
With God's permission, I'll heal the blind and the lepers,
and bring the dead to life.
I'll tell you what you may eat,
and what you may keep in your houses.
There is a Sign for you in this if you believe.
50* I'm confirming what I had already known of the Torah,
and I'm allowing you a part
of what had been forbidden to you before.
I'm coming to you with a Sign from your Lord,
so fear God and obey me!
51. God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him —
this is the straight path'."

52* Feeling that they were inclined to disbelief,
Jesus said:
"Who are my helpers in [the cause of] God?"
His disciples said:
"We are God's helpers. We've believed in God,
so vouch for us that we're Muslims.
53* O our Lord! We believe in Your Revelation
and we're following the Messenger,
so write us down as confessors!"

54* [The disbelievers] have plotted; and God has plotted,
but truly God is the best at plotting!
55* God said:
— O Jesus! I will let you die,
then I will raise you to Myself
and purify you from the disbelievers.
I shall put those who follow you
above those who will not believe till Resurrection Day.
And when you return to Me,
I shall resolve your disputes.
56. I will inflict a stern retribution upon the disbelievers
both in this life and in the Hereafter,
and they will find nobody to help them!
57. And to those who believed and did good works,
I will give a full reward,
indeed, God does not love the sinners!

58. — [O Muhammad!] This is what We are reading to you
from the Verses and the wise Reminder.
59* Verily, for God Jesus is like Adam,
whom He created from dust and to whom He said:
— Be! And there he was!

60. Truth is from your Lord,
so do not be of those who doubt!
61* If anyone argues with you about this
after Knowledge has come to you, say:
"Let's gather our sons and your sons,
our women and your women, our people and your people,
and let's pray and invoke the curse of God on the liars!"

62. Verily, this is a true story!
There is no god besides God —
verily, God is the Mighty, the Wise.
63. And if they turn away, God is fully aware of the corrupt!
64. Say:
"O People of the Scripture!
Let's agree to worship only God,
not to ascribe any partner to Him,
and not to associate with God any lords from our midst."

If they turn away, say:
"Be witnesses that we are Muslims!"

65* O People of the Scripture!
How can you argue about Abraham
if the Torah and the Evangel
have been sent down after his time?
Do you not understand?
66. You used to argue before about something you knew,
so why do you argue now
about something you do not know?
God knows, but you do not know!
67* Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian:
he was a Hanif who submitted himself to God;
and he was not an Associator.
68. Verily, the closest to Abraham are his followers —
this Prophet and those who have believed.
God is the Protector of [all] the believers!

69. A faction of the People of the Scripture
would like to lead you astray,
but they are leading astray only themselves,
without even realizing [it]!

70. O People of the Scripture!
Why do you reject the Signs of God
if you are witnessing them?
71. O People of the Scripture!
Why do you wrap Truth in falsehood,
and why do you conceal the Truth if you know it?

72. Some of the People of the Scripture say:
"Believe in the morning
in what has been revealed to the believers
and deny it in the evening —
perhaps they'll deny it as well.
73* And don't believe anyone
who does not follow your religion!"
Say:
"Verily, Guidance is God's teaching.
It's given to others, as it's given to you,
so why would they argue with you before your Lord?"
Say:
"Verily, Grace is in God's hand,
and He bestows it upon anyone He wills."
God is generous and all-knowing!
74. He distinguishes by His mercy anyone He wills.
To God belongs a boundless Grace!

75* Some of the People of the Scripture are such
that if you trusted them with a qintar [of gold],
they will return it to you.
But some others, if you trusted them with a dinar,
will not return it to you, unless you pressure them.

They say:
"We don't have any obligations toward the ignorant."
But they lie against God, and they know [it]!
76* And the one who fulfills his pledge and fears God...
verily, God loves the God-fearing!

77. Verily, those who sell for a small price
their oaths to God and their pledges,
shall have no part in the Hereafter.
On Resurrection Day God will not speak to them,
He will not even look at them!
He will not purify them [from sin],
and they shall receive a painful retribution.
78. Some of them distort the Scripture with their tongues.
You might think that something is in the Scripture,
but it is not in the Scripture at all.
They say:
"It's from God."
But it is not from God —
they are their fabrications about God, and they know [it]!
79* How can a man who has received from God
the Scripture, the Wisdom, and the Prophetic Gift,
say to the people:
"Serve me and not God," instead of:
"Stand by the Lord for you have taught the Scripture
and have studied it yourselves."

80. [God] would not command you
to make lords out of Angels and Prophets;
he would not command you to disbelieve
after you have submitted yourselves to Him.

81. God made a Covenant with the Prophets:
— I am giving you the Scripture and the Wisdom.
Then a Messenger will come to you
to confirm what you have received.
Trust him and help him! And He said:
— Do you accept My Covenant as your obligation?
They said: "We do accept [it]!"
[God] said:
— Then be witnesses, and I will be a Witness with you.
82. And those who will turn away are corrupt!

83. Why do they aspire to a religion other than God's
after everything in Heavens and earth
has submitted itself to Him, willingly or unwillingly?
Indeed, to Him is their return!
84* Say:
"We believe in God and in the Revelation
that has been sent down to us,
and in what had been sent down to Abraham,
Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Patriarchs,
and in what had been given by their Lord

to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets.
We make no distinction between them,
and We're all Muslims!"
85. If any one chooses a religion other than Islam,
it will not be accepted from him
and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers.
86. How can God show the way to a people
who had believed at first and testified
that the Messenger was true,
that the Proofs have reached them,
and then disbelieved later on?
God does not guide sinful people!
87. God, the Angels, and the people
will reward them with a curse
88. under which they shall abide for ever.
Their punishment shall not be reduced
and they shall not get a reprieve,
89. except those who have repented later on and made amends.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
90. Repentance shall not be accepted
from those who believed, then disbelieved,
and persisted in their disbelief,
for they are really astray.
91* Those who disbelieved and died disbelieving
shall not ransom themselves with all the gold on earth.
There is a painful punishment for them,
and nobody shall help them.
92. You shall not be upright until you begin contributing
from what is dear to you.
Whatever you contribute, verily, God will know about it!

93. The Children of Israel were allowed all kinds of food,
except what Israel had made unlawful for itself
before the Torah was revealed.
Say:
"Bring out the Torah and read it
if you're telling the truth."

94. After that those who fabricate lies about God —
they are the sinners!
95. Say:
"God speaks the Truth, so follow the creed of Abraham,
the Hanif who was not an Associator."

96* Verily, the first House [of worship] for people
was established in Mecca.
In it are the blessings and the guidance for the Worlds.
97. There are clear Signs in it — one of them
is the spot where Abraham used to stand.
Whoever enters it enjoys security.
Pilgrimage to this House is a duty before God
for anyone who has the means to travel.
But if anyone disbelieves...
verily, God has no need for the Worlds.

98. Say:
"O People of the Scripture!
Why do you reject the Signs of God
if God is Witness to all your deeds?"
99. Say:
"O People of the Scripture! If you are witnesses,
why do you turn the believers away from God's path
and try to make it crooked?
Indeed, God isn't unmindful of what you do."

100. O you who have believed!
If you listened to some of the people
who had received the Scripture,
they would turn you into disbelievers
after you have believed.
101. How can you deny faith
when the Verses of God are recited to you,
and when His Messenger is with you?
Whoever holds firmly onto God
will be guided to the straight path.

102. O you who have believed!
Fear God as He should be feared, and die only as Muslims.
103*Hold onto God's Covenant in one body and do not split up!
Remember the goodness of God towards you.
You were enemies indeed, but He has joined your hearts,
and you became brothers by His Grace.
You stood at the edge of the Fire Pit,
and He rescued you from it.
This is how God makes His Signs clear to you —
perhaps you will accept Guidance!

104*Let you form a community that invites to the good,
enjoins the honorable,
and restrains from the disreputable.
They are the only ones who will succeed!
105*Do not emulate those who received the Proofs
and then split up and fell into discord.
A great punishment is [in store] for them!

106. On that Day some faces shall brighten
and some others shall darken.
Those with darkened faces [will hear]:
— Have you not disbelieved after you had believed?
Then, taste the punishment for your disbelief!
107. But those with brightened faces
will be in God's mercy for ever.

108. Such are the Verses of God
that We recite to you in Truth.
God does not want injustice to the Worlds!
109. Everything in the Heavens and earth belongs to God.
And to God all the matters return!

V. 3: Salvation — the **furqan** of S.25:1.

V. 7: "[Verses] that are allegorical" or "[Verses] with hidden meaning." The Koran addresses itself not only to the intelligence of the listener, but also to his imagination. Thus any discussion of the historicity of events in the Koran is irrelevant.

According to Islamic symbolism, the human heart comprises four sites: in addition to **sadr**, **qalb**, and **fu'ad** mentioned on p. 187, there is the deepest recess of the heart (**sirr** or **lubb**), which is the site of the full understanding of God in his Unity and Glory (S.3:190).

V. 13: A reference to the battle of Badr (S.25:23).

V. 15: "The Grace of God" (**ridwan**).

V. 19: "The People of the Scripture" are the Jews. "Knowledge" is understanding the Koran (S.102) or the Koran itself.

V. 27: Night and day remind of darkness and light. Darkness is ignorance and spiritual death; light is knowledge and spiritual growth.

V. 28: In these formative years, the Muslims were advised to stay away from outsiders, especially from the renegades.

V. 35: In this verse, 'Imran is Moses's father and Mary is 'Imran's daughter, and thus, the sister of Moses and Aaron. Therefore, Jesus is 'Imran's grandson and Moses's nephew. In Luke 1:5, Zecharias's wife Elisabeth "was of the daughters of Aaron." Genealogical searches are futile as family relations may be metaphors.

The "Family" or the "House" of 'Imran might be a collective name for all the Jewish Prophets from Moses to Jesus.

V. 37: "Sanctuary" (**mihrab**). Mary has been raised by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (**Yahia**).

V. 44: There seems to have been a disagreement concerning Mary's guardianship. The situation was resolved by casting lots: the contenders wrote their names on writing reeds and cast them into the river. The winner was the one whose reed stayed afloat the longest.

V. 45: "Word" is **kalima** in Arabic and ***logos*** in Greek. That this passage connects to John 1:1 is speculative.

"The nearest to God" (**muqarribin**), as in S.56:11.

V. 47: The Koran does not mention that Mary was married to Joseph.

V. 46: Jesus spoke from the cradle in the apocryphal "The First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ," 1:2.

V. 49: A bird symbolizes the fate of a man.

V. 50: According to Islam, some of the Jewish dietary laws were too restrictive. These restrictions have been lifted by Jesus (cf. Mark 7:18-19, where it is stated that all food is clean).

V. 52: "A Helper" (**ansar**) is a supporter of Islam in Medina.

V. 53: "Confessors," "Witnesses," or "Martyrs for faith."

V. 54: "Plotted" (**makara**) or "made plans."

V. 55: The Muslims believe that Jesus died a natural death. He will return at the end of the world to slay "The Beast." Then he will die and will be raised again with all humankind.

The problem with the Christians was that by worshiping Jesus as son of God, they were defying the basic concept of monotheism. The Muslims do not believe in the suffering and resurrection of Jesus; therefore, in his redemption of mankind from both Adam's disobedience and

the transgressions of the sinners. They revere Jesus as a Prophet and as the precursor of the last Messenger, the Prophet Muhammed. The problem with the Jews was that many of them refused to consider the Koran as the culmination of the Bible. Both Muslims and Jews were monotheists, and their differences were mostly cultural: for example, the Jews stood by some food restrictions that Muslims considered unjustified.

Islam teaches that man is weak, but his soul is free of any "original sin." Man can achieve spiritual harmony by his faith and works. He must fear God's punishment only for his own sins and not for the transgressions of Adam and other people. In contrast, the Christians believe that man is born in sin, and cannot be saved without the sacrifice of Jesus and baptism. The concept of a Church as an institution that brings man in communication with God is not acceptable for Muslims. Unacceptable for them are the confession to a priest and communion; in marriage they see a formal contract that is fully described in the Koran.

V. 59: Both Adam and Jesus were not fathered by a man.

V. 61: The Shi'ites believe that this call was addressed to 'Ali, to his sons Hassan and Hussein, and to his wife Fatima.

Vv. 65f: Both Arabs and Jews descend from Abraham: the Arabs from his elder son Ishmael, and the Jews from Isaac.

V. 67: Abraham was a righteous man, a hanif (S.10:105).

V. 72: According to the Jews, one must believe in the older Scriptures and reject the new one (the Koran); then, the Muslims might repent and return to the belief in the old Scriptures.

V. 75: A rebuke to the Jewish leaders. "Ignorant" or "simple [folks]," or "unlettered people" are probably the pagan Arabs.

V. 76: Everyone must fulfill his promises. All people past and present are bound by the Mosaic Covenant.

V. 79: "Stand by the Lord" or be the Lord's worshipers;" the latter are called here **rabbaniyin**.

V. 84: The Koran enjoins the Muslims to respect all the Scriptures and to consider that all the Prophets are equal.

V. 91: "For all the gold on earth" or "the weight of the earth in gold."

V. 96: "In Mecca" or **Bacca** in a local dialect. It is also the ancient name of Mecca.

V. 97: The pilgrimage to Mecca is incontestably the most important spiritual event in the life of a Muslim. The trip to Arabia requires much exertion and funds. Some pilgrims save money for decades with the only purpose of going to Mecca. This is not only the fulfillment of an obligation to God, but also the unique religious experience of socializing with millions of people united in aspiration and effort. The pilgrimage is not only a total immersion in the religious ritual for ten consecutive days, but a one or even two year commitment away from home, depending on the length of the trip that is often done on foot. Upon their return home the pilgrims are feted by their relatives and neighbors and receive the honorific title of **hajji** which ensures a dignified position in their society.

Muslims believe that pilgrimage was instituted by Abraham. Pilgrims flocked to Mecca long before Islam. The focus of the pilgrimage was a sanctuary dedicated to the One God, but later desecrated by the introduction of literally hundreds of shrines and idols dedicated to local gods and goddesses. Islam can be seen as the return under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad to the monotheism of Abraham that started with Adam who knew only one God.

V. 103: "To God's Covenant," or "to the rope [stretched] by God." The reference is to the Medinans who had not rallied to the Prophet yet.

V. 104: "Community" or "nation" — **umma**.

V. 105: The reference is to the Jews and the Christians.

SURA 21 THE PROPHETS. ***S.21 is mixed in subject and composition, and it may present difficulties in reading and comprehending. The sura begins with accusations directed at the Meccans for not supporting the Prophet Muhammad and his mission. The usual introductory verses are followed by several unconnected passages (vv. 11-48), one of which examines the nature of Angels (vv. 26-29). The second part (vv. 48-93) brings up the Biblical prophets: Moses, Abraham, Lot, Noah, David and Solomon, Job, Jonas and others. The main story, that of Abraham, is targeted against polytheism. The themes of John the Baptist, (Yahia), and Jesus-Christ are briefly presented at the end (vv. 89-91).***

Like the preceding sura, S.21 is strongly critical of the "People of the Scripture," i.e., the Jews and the Christians.

21. THE PROPHETS

Meccan, 112 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Reckoning is coming closer to men,
but being mindless, they turn away.
2. No new Revelation comes to them from their Lord
that they do not listen to without mockery.
3* Frivolous are their hearts!

The wrong-doers say in their secret [meetings]:
"Isn't [Muhammad] a man like us?
Would you yield to magic with open eyes?"
4. Say:
"My Lord knows about [every] word in Heavens and earth.
He's the Hearer, the Knowing."

5. But they say:
"No, [these are] only bundles of dreams,
He contrived them himself! Indeed, he's a poet!
Let him bring us [at least] one Sign
like the ones that were sent in old times!"
6. Would ***they*** believe, if not a single town
We had destroyed before them, had believed?

7* — And before [you, o Muhammad],
We used to send only men We had inspired.
If you do not know it,
ask those who have received the Revelation!

8* We did not give them bodies that do not require food,
and they were not immortal.

9. We fulfilled Our promise to them:
We saved those We pleased, and We destroyed those
who were given to excesses.
10. We have sent down upon you a Scripture with a Reminder.
So why do you not understand?

11. How many towns We have destroyed for their iniquity!
We have settled other people in their place,
12. but sensing the approach of Our retribution,
they ran away from it.
13* Do not run away, return to good life and your dwellings —
perhaps you will be called to account!
14. They said:
"Woe to us! Truly We have transgressed!"
15* They didn't stop their lamentations
until We changed them into a devastated field.

16. We have not created the Heaven and the earth
and what is in between on a whim.
17. Were We looking for a pastime and had We wished for it,
We would have found it in Ourselves.
18. When We use Truth to eradicate falsehood,
We smash it to pieces and it disappears.
Woe to you for what you associate!
19* Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to [God].
Those who are with Him are proud to serve Him —
that never tires them out!
20. They glorify Him night and day without interruption.

21. Are gods from the earth
really able to bring [the dead] back to life?
22. How confused everything would have been
if there were other gods besides God!
Praised be God, the Lord of the Throne!
Exalted He is above what they ascribe [to Him]!
23. [God] cannot be questioned about His works;
but they shall be questioned.

24. Have they really taken other gods besides [God]?
Say:
"Then bring out your proofs!
This is a Revelation for those who are with me
and a Revelation for those who preceded me."
But most of them ignore the Truth and turn away.

25. And before your time, We have never sent a Messenger
without first inspiring him
that there is no god, except Me. So, worship Me!

26* They say:
"The Compassionate has taken children for Himself!"
Glory to Him! They are just honored servants [of His]
27. who do not speak before He speaks and follow His command.

28. He knows what was before them and what will be after them.
Intercession is only for those He approves of,
and they tremble in fear before Him.
29. If one of them says:
"I'm a god equal to Him,"
he'll be punished by Hellfire —
such is Our reward for the wrong-doers!

30. And the disbelievers, do they not realize
that the Heavens and the earth were connected
before We pulled them apart,
and that We made all living things from water?
Why will they not believe?
31* We have placed mountains on the earth as firm supports,
lest it quakes under them,
We have traced gaps between them to pass through —
perhaps they will accept Guidance!
32. We have made the sky as a protected dome,
yet they still turn away from its Signs.
33. He is the One, Who created the night and the day,
the sun and the moon, and everything
that sails in the firmament.

34. — [O Muhammad!] We have never made
any person immortal before you.
Should you die, then would [others] live for ever?
35. Every soul shall taste death.
We test you by evil and virtue — to Us is your return!
36. Seeing you, the disbelievers mock you:
"Is he not the one who keeps reminding you of your gods?"
They repudiate faith at the mention of the Compassionate!
37* Man is a creature of haste, but let him not hurry:
soon I will show you My Signs!
38. They say:
"When will the threat come upon us
if you're telling the truth?"
39. If only the disbelievers knew how helpless they will be
when they will be unable to shield
their faces and their backs from the Fire!

40. Yes! It shall catch them unawares and shall confuse them —
they will not avert it or get a respite!
41. Many Messengers have been ridiculed before you,
but the scoffers were caught
in what they had been sneering at.
42. Say:
"Who will protect you from the Compassionate night or day?"
But at the mention of their Lord, they turn away.
43. Do they have any gods capable of protecting them from Us?
They cannot help themselves or save themselves from Us.
44. Yes, We allowed them and their fathers
to enjoy themselves till their life became quite long.
Do they not see how We go over [their] land,

shrinking its boundaries? Then, are they the winners?
45. Say:
"I'm warning you by the Revelation."
But can the deaf hear the call, when they are warned?
46. If only a whiff of their Lord's wrath touched them,
they would say:
"Woe to us for the wrong we have done!"

47* On Resurrection Day We shall set an exact balance,
and no soul shall be wronged in the least.
We will take everything into account
down to the weight of a mustard seed.
Sufficient We are for accounting!

48* In the past We gave to Moses and Aaron
Salvation, Light, and a Reminder for the God-fearing
49. who fear their Lord in secret and dread the Hour.
50. Blessed is the Reminder sent down by Us —
then why do you reject it?

51. In the past We gave rectitude to Abraham,
indeed, We knew him well.
52. Once he said to his father and to his people:
"What are these images you worship?"
53. They said:
"We found out that our fathers had been worshiping them."
54. [Abraham] said:
"You and your fathers were in plain error!"
55. They said:
"Have you brought us the Truth,
or are you one of those who want to have fun?"
56. He said:
"No! Your Lord is the Lord of Heavens and earth,
their Creator, and I'm a witness to it.

57. By God! I'm determined to do something to your idols
as soon as you turn around and go away."
58. And he broke all of them to pieces,
except the biggest one, to let [the people] speak to it.
59. [Coming back], they said:
"The one who did that to our gods is surely evil!"
60. [Some people] said:
"We heard a youth called Abraham talking about them."
61. They said:
"Then bring him before the people,
and let them all see him:
there might be some witnesses!"
62. And they said:
"O Abraham! Is it you who did that to our gods?"
63. He said:
"No! It's the biggest of them who did it!
Ask them if they can talk!"
64. Turning to one another they said:

"Actually, the wrong-doers are you!"
65* But then, coming back on their words, they said:
"But you know that they can't talk!"
66. [Abraham] said:
"So, instead of God you worship
what can neither benefit you in anything nor harm you!
67. Fie upon you and upon whatever you worship besides God!
Why don't you think?"
68. They said:
"Protect your gods and burn him
if you want to do something!"
69. We said:
— O Fire! Be cool and safe to Abraham!
70. They plotted against him,
but We made them sustain the greatest losses!
71. We saved him and Lot in the land
that We had blessed for the Worlds.

72. To [Abraham] We gave Isaac, then We granted him Jacob,
and made them both righteous.
73. We made them leaders to guide under Our command.
We inspired them to do good works,
to establish the prayer, and to pay the zakat.
They were devoted to worshiping Us.

74. To Lot We gave Wisdom and Knowledge.
We saved him from [the dwellers of] a town
who practiced abominations —
they were really evil and perverse people.

75. We brought him into Our mercy,
for he was one of the righteous.

76. And earlier Noah called upon Us. We responded to him
and saved him and his family from a great disaster.
77. We protected him against the people who rejected Our Signs:
indeed, they were evil people, and We drowned them all.

78* When David and Solomon sat in judgement about a field
that was damaged at night by the sheep of some folks,
We were present at the trial.

79. We gave Solomon the Insight
and to both of them Wisdom and Knowledge.
We made mountains and birds join David in glorifying Us.
We did it so!
80. We taught [David] how to make coats-of-mail
for your protection against mutual violence.
Will you ever be grateful?
81. To Solomon We subjected the hurricane wind
to make it blow at his command
to the land We have blessed —
indeed, We are aware of all things!

82. There were [a few] Satans who dived for him
and performed other work, while We kept watch over them.

83. And Job called to his Lord:
"I'm beset by adversity,
but You're the Most Compassionate of the compassionate!"
84. We heard him and freed him from adversity.
We gave him his family back,
doubling it as a mercy from Us
and as a reminder for those who serve Us.

85* And Ishmael, Idris and Dhul-Kifl, all of them were patient.
86. We took them into Our mercy: indeed, they were all upright.

87* Jonas left in anger, assuming that We had no power over him.
But then he called to Us from darkness:
"There's no god but You! Glory to You!
Indeed, I was among the wrong-doers!"
88. We listened to him and rescued him from distress —
this is how We save the believers!

89. And Zechariah called to his Lord:
"O my Lord! Don't leave me alone!
You're the best of bequeathers!"

90. We listened to him, healed his wife, and gave him John.
They were keen to do good works,
and they used to call upon Us with love and fear.
They were humble before Us.
91* And also [Mary], who kept her chastity.
We breathed of Our Spirit into her
and made of her and her son a Sign for the Worlds.

92. Verily, your nation is one nation,
and I am your Lord! So worship Me!
93* They shall all return to Us even if they go separate ways.
94. He who does good work and believes,
his efforts shall not be in vain —
We will write it to his credit.

95. There is a ban on repenting in [every] town We destroyed
96* until Gog and Magog are released
and rush down from every hill.
97. When the true promise approaches, you will see
the eyes of the disbelievers bulging from terror:
"Oh, woe to us for forgetting about it!
Yes, we were in the wrong!"
98. And you, and what you worship besides God
shall be firewood for Hellfire — such is your destination!

99. If they were really gods, none of them
would have gotten into it to abide therein for ever,
100. where they shall hear nothing but their own groans!

101. Verily, the ones for whom We have decreed better things
shall be far from it.
102. They shall not hear the slightest sound [of Hellfire].
They shall dwell for ever among what their souls desire,
103. and the Great Terror shall not sadden them!
The Angels shall greet them:
"This is your promised Day!"
104. On that Day We will roll up the heaven like a scroll.
As We came up with the first Creation, We shall repeat it.
Such is Our promise, and We shall fulfill it for sure!

105. We have written in the Psalms
after the Revelation [came to Moses]
that My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.
106. Verily, there is a message in that
for those who worship [Us].
107. And you, We have sent you as a mercy to the Worlds.
108. Say:
"It has been revealed to me that your God is one God.
Will you then become Muslims!"
109. But if they turn away, say:
"I've warned you all alike, but I don't know
if what has been promised to you is nearby or far away.
110. But He knows what is said openly,
and He knows what you conceal.
111. I don't know, it might be a trial for you
and enjoyment [of life] for some time."
112* Say:
"O my Lord! You judge according to the Truth!
You are our Lord, the Compassionate,
You are Our Helper against everything they contrive!"

V. 7: "Those who have received the Revelation": the "People of the Scripture" — the Jews, the "Children of Israel" (S.3:19), and by extension, both the Jews and the Christians.

V. 8: The Messengers were not Angels.

V. 13: The advice given in this verse is ironical, and so is the answer given by Abraham to the idolaters in v.63.

V. 15: "Their lamentations" is said with irony. Lamentations and mourning are not in the spirit of the Koran.

V. 19: Here, the talk is about the Angels.

V. 26: That the chief deity can have children is a pagan idea. "The honored servants" are the Angels or Jesus and Mary.

V. 31: "Under them" — under the people or the disbelievers.

V. 37: "A creature of haste" — How true of modern man!

V. 47: Here ends the first part of the sura consisting of loosely bound passages. The heterogeneity of composition is due to the abundance of ideas, the alternation between direct and indirect speech, and the combination of poetic passages with stern warnings.

V. 48: For the concept of Salvation, **furqan**, see S.25:1.

V. 65: "Coming back on their words" or "reversing their belief," lit., "standing on their heads."

V. 78: The stories attributed to David and Solomon are mostly mythical and do not appear in the Bible (cf. SS. 38, 27, 34).

V. 85: **Idris** is Enoch; **Dhul-Kifl** is probably Iezekiel.

V. 87: Jonas or "the one with the fish" (**Dhun-Nun**). According to the Bible, when a storm hit the ship on which he was sailing, he was cast into the sea where a big fish swallowed him.

V. 91: Reference to the Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus.

V. 93: The Koran attributes the feuds between the Jewish and Christian factions to the weakness of their religious and moral convictions.

V. 96: Gog and Magog will arrive at world's end (S.18:94).

V. 112: "Against everything they contrive" or "against what you are ascribing [to Him]."

SURA 19 MARY. ***The sura starts with detailed stories of the birth of John the Baptist (vv. 2-15), based on the Gospel according to Luke, and the birth of Jesus (vv. 16-34), based on the apocryphal Gospel according to James. One notices the respect accorded to John the Baptist and to Jesus and Mary. These stories are followed by a reminder about the ancestors of the Arabs — Abraham, and Ishmael (Ismail), as well as about Moses and other Prophets. The second part of the sura deals with appeals to monotheism and to conversion to Islam.***

S.19 and others, where God is repeatedly called the Compassionate (Ar-rahman) form the group of so-called "Ar-rahman suras."

19. MARY

Meccan, 98 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Kaf ha ya 'ain sad.
2. In memory of your Lord's mercy to His servant Zechariah.

3. He called to his Lord in secret
4. and said:
"O my Lord! My bones have weakened
and my head has been lit up with grey,
but in my prayers to You, o my Lord,
I've never been unsuccessful.
5* I'm worried about the fate of my relatives
after I pass away.
Although my wife is barren, give me a heir from Yourself.
6. Make him my heir and the heir of the House of Jacob,
and make him, o my Lord, agreeable [to You]."
7* — O Zechariah!
We are announcing to you [the birth] of your son John,
the first one We are calling by this name.
8. [Zechariah] said:
"O my Lord! How can I have a son if my wife is barren,
and I've reached old age?"
9* [The Spirit] said:
"It will be as your Lord has announced:

— Easy it is for Me!
Indeed, you were nothing before I created you!"
10* [Zechariah] said:
"O my Lord! Give me a Sign!"
[God] said:
— Your Sign is that, while not being mute,
you will not speak to the people for three nights.

11. Coming out to his people from the sanctuary,
[Zechariah] enjoined them by signs
to glorify [God] mornings and evenings.

12. — O John! Hold fast to the Scripture!
From childhood We granted him Wisdom,
13* compassion from Us, and purity. He was devout,
14. kind to his parents, and not oppressive or rebellious.
15. Let peace be on him the day he was born,
the day he dies, and the Day he is raised!

16* Mention Mary in the Scripture.
She left her family for a place in the east
17* and retired from them behind a curtain.
We sent her Our Spirit,
[who] came to her in the full guise of a person.
18. [Mary] said:
"If you aren't God-fearing,
I'll find refuge from you with the Compassionate."
19. [The Spirit] said:
"I'm your Lord's Envoy — He bestows upon you a pure son."
20. She said:
"How can I have a son
if no man has ever touched me, and I'm not unchaste?"
21. Then [the Spirit] announced:
"Your Lord has said:
— Easy it is for Me!
We will make him a Sign for the people
and a mercy from Us. Let it be so!"

22* She carried a child and retired with him to a remote place.
23. The pains brought her to the trunk of a palm-tree.
She said:
"Oh! Why haven't I died before, forsaken and forgotten!"
24. A voice [was heard] from under her:
"Don't grieve! Your Lord has run a stream beneath you,
25. and [if] you shake the palm-tree that stands over you,
you'll be showered with fresh ripe [fruit].
26. Eat, drink, and freshen your eyes.
And if you see someone, say:
'I've vowed to fast to the Compassionate
and today I won't speak to anyone.'"

27. When she returned to her family, they told her:
"O Mary! What happened to you is a thing unheard of!

28* O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a wicked man
and your mother was not unchaste!"

29. And when she pointed to [her son], they said:
"How can we talk to a child who is still in his cradle?"
30* [The child] said:
"I am a servant of God.
He gave me a Scripture and made me a Prophet.
31. He made me blessed wherever I go.
He enjoined on me prayer and charity for as long as I live,
32. and also kindness to my mother.
He didn't make me oppressive or miserable.
33. Let peace be on me the day I was born,
the day I die, and the Day I'm raised."
34. Such was Jesus, the son of Mary.
This Word is true, though many dispute it.

35. It is not proper for God to beget a son for Himself.
Glory to Him! When He decides something,
He just says: — Be! And there it is!

36. God is my Lord and your Lord,
so worship Him: this is the right way!
37* But their factions continue to argue among themselves.
Woe to the disbelievers when the Great Day comes!
38. How clearly shall they hear and see
on the Day when they appear before Us!
Today the wrong-doers are in manifest error!

39. — [O Muhammad!] Warn them about the Day of Sorrow
when [their] fate shall be decided —
they are still heedless and do not believe!
40. We are the heirs to the earth
and to those who dwell on it,
to Us is their return!

41. Mention Abraham in the Scripture.
Verily, he was a righteous Prophet.
42. He said to his father:
"O my father! Why do you worship something
that doesn't hear and see,
and doesn't benefit you in any way?
43. O my father! I've received Knowledge
that hadn't come to you, so follow me,
and I'll guide you on the smooth path.
44. O my father! Don't worship Satan
because Satan rebelled against the Compassionate.
45. O my father! I fear that you'll be touched
by punishment from the Compassionate,
and that you'll become Satan's friend."

46. [His father] said:
"O Abraham! What makes you hate my gods?

If you don't stop, I'll surely stone you!
Go away from me for a long time."
47. [Abraham] said:
"Peace be upon you! I'll pray my Lord to forgive you,
for He is gracious to me.
48. I'll leave you and whatever you worship besides God,
and I'll call upon my Lord —
perhaps my Lord will not reject my prayer."

49. After [Abraham] turned away from them
and from whatever they worshiped besides God,
We gave him Isaac and Jacob, making each of them a Prophet.
50* We bestowed Our mercy upon them,
and We granted them the high word of Truth.

51. Mention Moses in the Scripture.
He was chosen as a Messenger and a Prophet.
52* We called him from the right side of the mountain
and let him approach for a spiritual [communion].
53. By Our Mercy We gave him his brother Aaron, a Prophet.

54. Mention Ishmael in the Scripture.
He fulfilled [his] promises
and was a Messenger and a Prophet.
55. He enjoined on his family prayer and almsgiving,
and he was agreeable to his Lord.

56* Mention Idris in the Scripture,
a man of Truth, a Prophet,
57. whom We lifted up to a high place.
58. These are some of the Prophets
to whom God has granted [His] Grace.
They are of the posterity of Adam
whom We rescued together with Noah.
They are of the posterity of Abraham and Israel
whom We have guided and chosen.
When the Verses of the Compassionate were recited to them,
they used to prostrate themselves and bow in tears.

59. But they have been followed by a posterity
which neglected the prayer and pursued [their] lusts.
Soon they shall face their destruction,
60. except those who repented, believed, and did good works:
these shall not be wronged in any way!
They shall enter Paradise —
61* the Gardens of Eden, promised by the Compassionate
to His servants in the Unseen.
His promise shall truly come to pass!
62. Therein they shall not hear any babble, but only "Peace".
Therein they shall have provisions morning and evening.
63. Such is Paradise! We give it in inheritance
to those of Our servants who fear God.

64* [The Angels say]:
"We descend only by your Lord's command
who owns everything in the future,
the past, and in between. Your Lord never forgets!
65. He's the Lord of Heavens and earth
and what is in between.
So worship Him and serve Him with patience.
Do you know anyone else going by His Name?"

66. Man says:
"Shall I really be raised after I die?"
67. Does not man remember he was nothing before We created him?
68. By your Lord!
We will certainly gather them together with the Satans
and put them all on their knees around Hell.
69. Then, from each faction, We will certainly pluck
the most obstinate rebels against the Compassionate.
70. We surely know
who deserves the most to be burned in [Hell].
71* None of you shall be exempt from passing through it.
Such is the irrevocable decree of your Lord!
72. We will rescue the God-fearing
and leave the wrong-doers [standing] on their knees.

73. When Our Verses are read to them as clear Proofs,
the disbelievers say to the believers:
"Which of the two sides
is better in position and stronger in influence?"
74. But how many generations We have destroyed before them
that outdid them in outfit and appearance!
75* Say:
"The Compassionate will extend the life of the sinners,
until they see what they are threatened with:
the punishment or the Hour. Then they will realize
whose position is worse and whose forces are weaker.
76. God increases Guidance to those who seek Guidance.
With your Lord the lasting good deeds
are best in reward and best in fruition."

77. Have you seen the one who rejects Our Signs and says:
"I'm sure I'll be given both wealth and children!"
78. Did he grasp the Unseen
or did he make a covenant with the Compassionate?
79. Of course not! We will record his words
and keep adding to his punishment.
80* We will take into account what he says,
and he shall appear before Us all alone.
81. They took to other gods besides God
in the hope of boosting their glory.
82. But no! The [idols] shall reject their worship
and become their opponents.

83* Do you not see that We have sent Satans
against the disbelievers to incite them to rebellion?
84. So, do not hurry against them,
for We keep an exact count of their days!

85. On that Day We shall assemble the God-fearing
as envoys before the Compassionate.
86. And We shall drive the wrong-doers to Hell
like cattle to water —
87. they shall all be bereft of intercession, except those
to whom it has been promised by the Compassionate.

88. They say:
"The Compassionate has begotten a son!"
89. Your allegation is so outrageous
90. that it makes the skies ready to explode,
the earth to split,
and the mountains to crumble to pieces.
91. How can they ascribe a son to the Compassionate
92. when it does not befit the Compassionate to have a son!
93. There is no creature in Heavens and earth
that shall not approach the Compassionate as a servant.
94. He has numbered them, He has counted them accurately!
95. On Judgment Day they shall come to Him one by one,
96* and the Compassionate will take into His affection
those who believed and did good works.

97. We have made [the Koran] easy in your tongue
to let you bring good tidings to the God-fearing
and to let you warn people given to discord!

98. We have destroyed many generations before them!
Do you perceive a single one of them,
do their whispers reach you?

V. 1: The five letters that begin this sura are considered by some to be abbreviations of the names of Zechariah, Yahia (John), Mariam (Mary), 'Issa (Jesus), and Ibrahim (Abraham). An alternate suggestion is that these letters represent five of the Names of God. The other "lettered" suras do not yield to such speculations (see the Introduction to S.44, p.76).

V. 5: Zechariah wanted an adopted child (S.3:37, C.21:89).

V. 7: John was the first by this name in the family of Zechariah to be chosen by God (cf. Luke 1:61).

V. 9: If the words "So will it be!" are translated as "How can it be!" then, they could be Zechariah's words. The one who "said" is either the Angel or God.

V. 10: Here it is "three nights." Elsewhere it is "three days" (S.3:41). In both cases three 24-hour periods are meant.

V. 13: Comp. Luke, 11:41: "But rather give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you."

V. 16: On the eastern side of the Temple.

V. 17: The Spirit is the Angel Gabriel (S.53:5).

V. 22: "A remote location": it could be Nazareth, 70 miles north from Bethlehem, or a remote corner of the Temple as in v.16.

V. 28: Mary is identified with her namesake, the sister of Aaron and Moses (S.3:35).

V. 30: Jesus is "a servant of God" like all the righteous.

V. 37: The "factions": Jewish or Christian sects (S:40:5).

V. 50: Cf. S.26:85. A man of Truth is a **saddiq**.

V. 52: The mountain is Mount Sinai.

V. 56: Idris is Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24), cf. C.21:85.

V. 61: "Gardens of Eden" or "Eternity." Islam teaches that spiritual perceptions are real in the Unseen and deceiving on earth. Knowledge is the perception of the spiritual essence of everything, and God is the totality of everything.

V. 64: "What is in the future, in the past, and in between" or "what is before us, behind us, and in between."

V. 71: There is a belief that after death people will have to pass over Hell on a hair-thick bridge.

V. 75: To extend the life, lit., "to stretch a rope."

V. 80: "We will take into account what he says," lit.: "We
will inherit what he says."

V. 83: Satan seduces the disbelievers with God's permission (S.15:28-44; S.7:16-18).

V. 96: "Love" **(wad)** is goodwill between people. This feeling is more elevated than ordinary love **(hob)**.

SURA 43 THE ORNAMENTS. ***This sura is composed of passages that belong to both the Meccan and Medinan periods. That we are entering a transitional period in the development of Islam is shown by the frequent use of the word Prophet for Messenger and by a more open criticism of the Christians and Jews. A short segment on Abraham is followed by passages about Moses and Jesus's place among the other Prophets.***

The sura is directed against polytheism that was denounced by Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and against material wealth that causes spiritual decline. Frivolous people are often taken in by their ornaments: the rich people dream of houses made of silver and gold, and Pharaoh scorns Moses because he does not wear golden bracelets.

One can find still other themes in the sura; however, its character and dynamics depend on the poetic drive, unusual images, repetitions, and digressions. Like many other suras — if not the whole Koran — S.43 is meant to be read in a religious meditative mood with the critical faculties temporarily disconnected.

43. THE ORNAMENTS

Meccan, 89 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2. By the lucid Scripture!
3. We have made it an Arabic Koran —
perhaps you will understand it!

4* Verily, it is for us the mother of Scripture,
exalted and wise.

5. Shall We withhold the Reminder from you
for being a people who transgressed all limits?
6. We sent so many Prophets to the first generations,
7. but not a single Prophet has ever come to them
without them laughing at him!
8. We destroyed them,
albeit they were greater in power than these ones.
Such is the example of the first people.
9* But had you asked them,
Who has created the Heavens and earth,
they would have certainly said:
"They've been created by the Almighty, the Knowing."

10. He is the One, Who has spread out the earth for you
and has traced roads upon it —
perhaps, you will follow the right way!

11. He is the One Who in due measure
pours down the rain from the sky.
We shall revive you just as We revive a dead land!
12. He is the One, Who has created everything in pairs.
He gave you ships to sail and beasts to ride.
13. When you sit squarely on their backs,
you remember the favors of your Lord.
Sitting upon them, you say:
"Glory to Him, who made this for our use,
indeed, we wouldn't have ever achieved it ourselves.
14. And we'll surely return to our Lord!"

15* Yet, they made of some of His servants a part of Himself.
Verily, stubborn is man in his disbelief!

16. Is it possible that from all He has created,
He took daughters for Himself, and He gave sons to you?
17* Although they ascribe [daughters] to the Compassionate,
when a man receives the news of the [birth of a daughter],
his face darkens, and he can hardly contain his rage.
18* How can one [associate to God those]
who grew among trinkets and are unskilled in debates?

19* And the Angels who serve the Compassionate,
they mistake for females!
Have they witnessed their creation?
Their testimony shall be recorded
and they shall be called to account!
20* They say:
"Had the Compassionate willed it,
we wouldn't have worshiped them!"
But they do not know anything about them —
they are only their own fabrications!

21. Have We not given them a Scripture before,
to which they should have been holding fast?

22. They say:
"We've found that our fathers
have been following a certain creed,
and we're following in their tracks."

23. — And before you, [o Muhammad!],
whenever We sent a Warner to a town,
the most notable of the dwellers said:
"We've found that our fathers had a creed,
and we're following in their tracks."

24. [The Prophet] said to them:
"And what if the Guidance that I brought you
is better than the one you've found with your fathers?"
They said:
"We deny [the Message] you've been sent with!"
25. — And We took revenge upon them:
consider the fate of those who denied!

26. Abraham said to his father and to his people:
"I'm staying clear of what you're worshiping.
27. [I worship] only the One, Who has created me —
He'll certainly show me the way."
28. He left these words to his posterity,
hoping that perhaps they will repent.

29. — Yes, I let them and their fathers enjoy life
until the Truth and a Messenger
came to them with clear explanations.
30. But when the Truth came to them, they said:
"This is just magic! We won't ever believe it!"
31* And they also said:
"Why wasn't this Koran sent to a man of influence
in either of the two cities?"
32* Are they the ones who apportion the favors of your Lord?
No, ***We*** are apportioning the provisions in this life.
We raise some of them in rank above the others
to allow some of them to take others in their employ.
But God's mercy is better than what they have amassed!

33* If [all] the people were one nation,
then to those who rejected the Compassionate
We should have given silver roofs for their houses,
and steps leading upstairs,
34. and doors in their homes, and couches to recline upon,
35. and golden ornaments.
But these are only amenities of the present life,
while the Hereafter is with your Lord,
ready for the God-fearing.

36* To him who refuses to remember the Compassionate,
We shall assign a Satan for companion
37. to lead him astray from the [right] path,

while he thinks that he is guided aright.
38. When he comes before Us, he will say:
"It would've been better for us to be as far apart
as the east is from the west!"
Yes, what a wretched companion he is!

39. Nothing will help you if you were doing wrong —
today you are companions in punishment!

40. — [O Muhammad!] You cannot force the deaf to hear,
as you cannot lead on the straight path
the blind or someone in deep error.
41* But We will retaliate against them,
when We take you away
42. or show you what We have promised them.
Verily, We shall prevail!
43. Hold fast onto what We are inspiring you with —
verily, you are on the straight path!
44. Verily, this Reminder is for you and your people —
soon you shall all be brought to account!

45. Inquire about Our Messengers
whom We had sent before you:
have We appointed for them other gods
to be worshiped instead of the Compassionate?

46. We sent Moses with Our Signs to Pharaoh and his court.
He said:
"I'm a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds."
47. And he showed them Our Signs,
but they only laughed at them, albeit each of Our Signs
was more compelling than the preceding one.
We seized them with punishment,
hoping that they might turn [to Us].
49. But they said:
"O Magician! Pray to your Lord in our behalf
as He'd promised you —
then we'll surely accept Guidance."
50. But they broke their pledge
as soon as We lifted their punishment.

51. Then Pharaoh addressed his people, saying:
"O my people! Isn't Egypt in my power as surely
as the rivers that flow at my feet? Don't you see it?
52. And am I not better than this measly fellow
who can hardly express himself?
53. Why doesn't he wear golden bracelets
and [why] isn't he accompanied by Angels?
54. This is how he made fools of his people
to keep them in submission.
Verily, these people were dissolute!
55. Since they had angered Us,
We took revenge upon them: We drowned them all!

56. We made this people of the past
an example for future generations.

57* When the son of Mary is given as an example,
your people are in turmoil.
58. They say:
"Who's better, our gods or he?"
They bring this up only to argue with you —
indeed, how obstinate these people are!

59. But [Jesus] was just a servant [of God]
to whom We bestowed Our mercy
and whom We set as an example to the Sons of Israel.
60. Had We so willed, We would have made some of you Angels,
coming one after the other upon the earth.
61* Verily, he is a Sign of the Hour —
have no doubts about it and follow Me:
this is the straight path!
62. Do not allow Satan to restrain you,
for he is your open foe!

63. Jesus came with the Proofs and said:
"I come to you with Wisdom
to explain to you a part
of what you're arguing about.
So fear God and obey me!
64. Verily, God is my Lord and your Lord.
Therefore, worship Him: this is the straight path."
65. But their factions continued to argue among themselves.
Woe to the wrong-doers
because of the punishment of the painful Day!
66. Let them only wait for the Hour,
which shall dawn upon them so suddenly
that they shall not recover their senses.
67. On that Day friends shall become mutual enemies,
but not those who fear God.

68. O My servants!
On that Day you shall have no fear and no grief
69. if you believe in Our Signs and surrender [to God]:
70* — Enter the Garden with your wives and be happy!
71. You shall be served therein with golden dishes and bowls.
Everything shall be there to your soul's desire
and for your eyes' delight!
And you shall dwell therein for ever!
72. Such is the Garden that you shall inherit for your deeds.
73* It is full of abundant fruit for you to enjoy.

74. But the sinners shall abide
in the torments of Hellfire for ever
75. with no relief, deep in despair.
76. We will not be unjust to them —

they were unjust to themselves.
77* They will call:
"O Malik! Let your Lord put an end to us!"
He shall say: "No! You're [here] to stay!"

78* We have brought you the Truth,
but most of you hate the Truth!

79. Have they arranged anything by themselves?
No! ***We*** are the arrangers!
80. Or do they think that We are not aware
of their secrets and private encounters?
Our Envoys are at their side, keeping a complete record.
81. Say:
"If the Compassionate had a son,
I would've been be the first to worship him!"
82. Glory to the Lord of Heavens and earth,
the Lord of the Throne!
[Exalted He is] above what they ascribe [to Him]!
83. Let them babble and play until they meet the promised Day.

84. He is the One, Who is God in Heaven and God on earth,
the Wise, the All-knowing.
85. Blessed be the Sovereign of Heaven and earth,
and what is in between.
He knows the Hour [of Judgment], and to Him is your return.
86* And those they invoke beside [God]
will not intercede [in their behalf].
Only a witness to the Truth can do it, they know it!
87. If you ask them Who has created them,
they shall certainly say:
"God!"
Then why are they turning away?
88. And [the Messenger] said:
"O my Lord! Verily, these people will never believe!"
89. So turn away from them and say: "Peace!"
And soon they shall know!

V. 4: "The Mother of the Scripture" is the origin or proto-type of the Scripture, or the sum of all Revelations.

V. 9: These words refer to those who believe in God, the Creator, but deny that He cares for His creatures.

Vv. 15f: The attribution of a son or a daughter to God is a blasphemous fantasy of the polytheists.

V. 17: The birth of a daughter instead of a son was deemed to be a disgrace by the Arabs (S.108, S.16:57-59).

V. 18: This seems to be a condemnation of effeminate and confused people in general and not specifically of women. According to the Koran, men and women are equal before God. However, the role of women in different societies depends on tradition. Polygamy in early Muslim society allowed many women to lead an honorable life. Without polygamy, given the

numerical preponderance of women over men, many women would have been left without shelter and a family.

V. 19: The idols the Prophet was opposed to, were the female Angels (S.53:19-28).

V. 20: The disbelievers accuse God of not preventing them from becoming idolaters.

V. 31: The two cities are probably Mecca and Taif.

V. 32: Full social equality is impossible in any society.

Vv. 33f: "If [all] the people were one nation," i.e., if all the people were disbelievers.

Vv. 36, 38: "The companion" is the Qarina, the evil persona of a man (S.50:23, S.7:202).

V. 41: "Whether We take you away" — comp. S.10:46.

Vv. 57-59: Jesus was a Prophet and a servant of God like all the other Messengers.

V. 61: This verse seems to be about the second coming of Jesus before the Judgment Day, when he'll unite all mankind under Islam. The idea of messianism — the coming of a savior (**Mahdi**) before the end of the world — is not alien to Islam. It is believed that the Conciliator (Shiloh) of the Bible (Gen. 49:10) is the Prophet Muhammad. As for the Shi'a, they believe in the return of the lost twelfth Imam, who will establish an exemplary order on earth for some time when all the rules of Islam are complied with.

V. 70: Believing women will be admitted to Paradise along with their husbands (S.36:56).

V. 73: The fruit — the good deeds of man.

V. 77: **Malik** (the owner) is the guardian Angel of Hell. Non-existence is better than eternal suffering.

V. 78: The word ***Truth*** stands out in the Koran like a guiding light. "***We have brought you the Truth***" is one of the most important declarations in the Koran (cf. vv. 29-30). The tragic heroes of the greatest writings of the world, Oedipus, Hamlet, Don Quixote, Alyosha Karamazov, as well as such extraordinary men as Jesus and Buddha were all seekers of the Truth, and the Prophets sought the Truth often with tragic consequences for themselves.

V. 86: "And they know [it]" has no object. The intercessor might be the Prophet Muhammad or Jesus, the subject of vv. 57-64, or the savior Mahdi (cf. note to v.61).

SURA 23 THE BELIEVERS. ***Most of this deeply poetic sura is typically Meccan. A description of the believers (vv. 1-11) is followed by the story of Noah (vv. 23-30) and of an unnamed Messenger, who typifies all the Prophets (vv. 31-41). The sura contains a short segment on Moses and some other Prophets, and Warnings to Jews and Christians. Vv. 1-16 are among the most beautiful of the Koran by form and content.***

23. THE BELIEVERS

Meccan, 118 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Successful shall be the believers
2. who are humble in praying,
3. who avoid vain talk,
4. who engage in almsgiving,
5. who restrain themselves in sex,

6* except with their wives and their slaves —
they are blameless in that —
7. (but those who go beyond that are sinners),
8. who keep their covenants and pledges,
9. and who pray as ordained.
10. These are the heirs
11* who shall inherit Paradise
and dwell in it for ever.

12. We have created man from the purest clay.
13* Then We placed him in a safe place as a drop.
14* From the drop We made a clot of blood.
Inside the clot We made bones
and clothed them with flesh,
and from that We produced another creature.
Blessed be God, the best of Creators!
15. Time goes by and you shall die,
16. and then you shall be raised on Resurrection Day.

17. We have created seven [heavenly] paths above you.
We have never neglected Our Creation!

18. From the sky We send down the rain in due measure
and let it seep into the ground,
and then We are able to retrieve it!
19. With it We grow for you groves of palm-trees
and vine orchards with abundant fruit that you eat,

20. and the tree originating from Mount Sinai
that produces oil and relish for consumers,
21. and the cattle in which there is a lesson for you.
We let you drink what is in their bellies.
They have another use: you eat them,
22. and they carry you like ships.

23. We sent Noah to his people.
He said:
"O my people! Worship God.
You have no other god but Him.
So why don't you fear Him?"
24. The leaders of the disbelievers among his people said:
"He's a man like us, but he wants to dominate you.
Were it God's will, He'd have sent us Angels.
We've never heard anything like that from our forefathers.
25. Verily, this man is demented,
but let us bear with him for a little while."
26. [Noah] said]:
"O my Lord! Help me: they call me a liar!"
27* We inspired him:
— Build an ark in Our sight and under Our Guidance.
When We issue Our Command, and the waters overflow,
bring into [the ark all] the creatures in pairs,
male and female, as well as your family,

except those who have already been condemned.
Do not speak to Me for the sinners — they shall be drowned.
28. After settling on the ark with your company, say:
"Praised be God who saved us from sinful people!"
29. And say:
"O my Lord! Grant me a blessed landing,
for You're the best at landing!"
30. Verily, there are Signs in this —
this is how We submit [people] to trial!

31. After them We raised another generation.
32. We sent them a Messenger from their midst [who said]:
"Worship God! You have no other god, but Him,
so why don't you fear Him?"
33. But the leaders of his people who had disbelieved
and had denied the meeting in the Hereafter,
though We gave them many amenities in this life, said:
"He's a man just like you:
he eats what you eat and drinks what you drink.
34. If you obeyed a man from your midst,
you'd surely sustain losses.

35. Didn't he promise you that you'll be raised
after you die and are reduced to dust and bones?
36. But what has been promised to you is far, far away,
37. and there is nothing in the world, except our life.
We live and we die, but We'll [never] be raised!
38. He's just a man who lies against God,
We'll never believe him!"
39. [The Prophet] said:
"O my Lord! Help me against their charges of lying!"
40. Soon they shall regret [it]
41. when the Shout overtakes them,
and We turn them into rubbish.
Away with the people of sinners!

42. After them We have brought up other generations,
43* but no community can rush or postpone its term.

44. We had been sending Our Messengers in succession,
but each time a Messenger came to a community,
they accused him of lying.
Then We began replacing the nations,
making some of them examples [for others].
Away with the people who disbelieve!

45. We sent Moses and his brother Aaron
with Our Signs and manifest power
46. to Pharaoh and his attendants
who were arrogant and made much of themselves.
47. They said:
"Why should we believe these two men
if they are like us, and their people are our slaves?"

48. Thus they rejected the two [Messengers]
    and shared the fate of those who were destroyed.
49. As to Moses, We gave him the Scripture
    to make him lead [his people] on the straight path.

50. We made a Sign of Mary and her son.
    We gave them a safe shelter by a hill with a spring.

51. O Messengers!
    Enjoy what is good and do good deeds.
    I am aware of [everything] you do!
52. Your brotherhood is one brotherhood,
    and I am your Lord, so fear Me!
53. But they split their creed into factions,
    and each faction exulted in what it possessed.
54. Leave them to their ignorance for a while!
55. Do they think that if We gave them wealth and children,
56. We would hasten [other] favors to them?
    No, they do not understand!

57. Verily, those who live in fear before their Lord,
58. who believe in the Signs of their Lord
59. and do not associate [anyone] to their Lord,
60. and those who give alms — their hearts tremble
    because they shall return to their Lord.
61. They hasten in good works and are foremost in them.

62. We do not load any soul more than she can bear.
    We possess the Scripture that tells the Truth —
    and nobody shall be wronged!
63. But there is an abyss between [the Truth]
    and what is in their hearts,
    and they are still engaged in [wrong] deeds.

64. But those who are spoiled by the amenities of life,
    how loudly they shall wail
    when We hit them with punishment!
65. Do not wail today: no help is forthcoming from Us!
66. When My Signs were recited to you,
    you used to turn around on your heels
67* in your arrogance, and you talked idly about [the Koran]
    like the story-tellers at night.

68. Why would they not ponder the Word [of God]?
    Or did they learn something
    their forefathers had not known?
69. Failing to recognize their Messenger,
    have they not rejected him?
70* They said he is possessed, but he brought them the Truth.
    Yes, most of them hate the Truth.
71. But if the Truth justified their passions,
    the Heaven and the earth would collapse
    with all their contents.

We came to them with a Reminder,
but they turned away from the Reminder!
72. Perhaps you ask them for a reward,
but the reward of your Lord is much better.
He is the best of providers!

73. Verily, you call them to the straight path,
74. but those who do not believe in the Hereafter
will stray far away from this path.

75. Even if We pardoned them
and freed them from the distress
that looms over them,
they would persist in their error
and would wander around in confusion.
76* We hit them with punishment,
but they did not submit to their Lord
and they did not turn [to Him].
77. Soon We will open before them
the gate to a stiff punishment —
then they shall sink in despair!

78. He is the One, Who has created for you
hearing, sight, feeling, and understanding —
but how small is your gratitude!
79. He is the One, Who multiplied you on earth,
and to Him you shall be returned!
80. He is the One, Who dispenses life and death
and alternates night and day.
Then, why do you not understand?
81. Talking like those who preceded them,
82. they say:
"Is it possible that we'll be raised after we died
and turned into dust and bones?
83. This has been promised to us,
as to our fathers before,
yet it's nothing but fables of the old!"
84* Say:
"Do you know who owns the earth and those who are on it?"
85. They shall say: "God!"
Say:
"Then why won't you come to your senses?"
86. Say:
"Who's the Lord of the seven skies
and the Lord of the supreme Throne?"
87. They shall say: "God!"
Say:
"Then why aren't you scared?"
88. Say:
"Do you know in Whose hands is power over everything,
Who protects and doesn't need protection Himself?"
89. They shall say: "God!"

Say:
"Then, why are you deluding yourselves?"

90. Yes, We have sent them the Truth,
but they continued to lie.

91. God has not begotten a son,
and there is no god besides Him,
otherwise each god would have taken what he had created,
and some of them would have subjugated the others.
Glory to God, He is above whatever they attribute to Him!
92. He knows the hidden and the manifest.
He is high above whatever they ascribe to Him!
93. Say:
"O my Lord, if You show me
what is promised to them,
94. then, o my Lord, don't leave me
among the people who do wrong!"
95. — Verily, it is in Our power to show you
what has been promised to them.
96. So repel evil with what is better.
We know best what they associate.
97. Say:
"O my Lord! I seek refuge with You
against the temptations of Satans.
98. O my Lord! I seek refuge with You,
lest they approach me!"

99. When death comes to one of them, he says:
"O my Lord! Return me [to life]
100*to let me add some goodness to the deeds I've left behind."
— No, by no means! These are no more than empty words!
There will be a barrier behind them
till the Day they are raised up.
101. On that Day when the trumpet resounds,
the family ties between them shall dissolve,
and they shall stop asking about one another.

102. Successful shall be the ones whose scales are heavy,
103. but the ones with light scales shall lose their souls
and shall abide in Hell for ever.
104. The Fire shall scorch their faces
and distort their features!
105. Did you not reject My Verses
when they were recited to you?
106. They will say:
"O our Lord! Misfortunes have overcome us,
and we've lost our way!
107. O our Lord! Get us out of here!
If we return [to sin],
indeed, we'll be the transgressors!"
108. [God] will say:
— Get lost therein, and do not talk to Me anymore!

109. This is how some of My servants prayed:
"**O our Lord!**
We do believe, so forgive us and have mercy upon us —
indeed, You're the best of the merciful!"

110. — And you were so busy ridiculing them
that while laughing at them, you forgot My Reminder.
111. On that Day I shall reward them for their patience.
Verily, they shall be successful!
112. [God] will say to them:
— How many years have you stayed on earth?
113. They will say:
"We stayed one day or a part of a day,
but better ask those who kept time."
114. [God] will say:
— Short was your stay, if you only knew!
115. Did you think that We have created you on a whim,
and that you will not be returned to Us?

116. Exalted be God, the King of Truth!
There is no god but Him,
the Lord of the glorious Throne!
117. Whoever calls to another god besides God
does it without evidence,
and is accountable only to his Lord.
Verily, the disbelievers shall not be successful!
118. Say:
"O my Lord! Forgive and have mercy!
You're the best of the merciful!"

V. 6: "Slaves," lit.: "those in their right hands."

V. 11: Here, Paradise is called in Farsi **Firdus**, from which the word "Paradise" is derived (S.18:107).

V. 13: "A drop" of semen.

V. 14: It is said that the Prophet's scribe, 'Abdullah bin Sagada exclaimed at this point "Blessed be God, the best of the Creators!" and the Prophet made these words part of the record.

V. 27: "And the waters overflow," or "and the oven boils."

Vv. 43, 44: **Umma** — "community," later on, "nation" (S.3:104).

V. 67: Apparently, like modern Arabs, the Prophet's contemporaries enjoyed competing in wit during nocturnal revels.

V, 70: Cf. S.43:78.

Vv. 76-77: Two punishments — one on earth and one in Hell.

Vv. 84-90: A repetition of what has been said in S.43:9.

V. 100: "A barrier" — the transition between death and resurrection, or between this world and the Unseen (cf. S.7).

SURA 98 CLEAR EVIDENCE. ***The purpose of this short sura is to invite the Jews and the Associators to accept the basic tenets of Islam.***

98. CLEAR EVIDENCE
Meccan, 8 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* The disbelievers among the People of the Scripture
and the Associators would not have changed
if clear Evidence had not been brought to them
2. by a Messenger of God who read to them from sacred scrolls
3. with convincing writings.
4. The People of the Book did not split [into factions]
until clear Evidence came to them.
5. They were commanded to worship God
as sincerely as the Hanifs, to pray, and to pay the zakat.
This is the true religion!

6. Verily, the People of the Scripture and the Associators
who have rejected faith shall abide in Hellfire for ever —
they are the worst of creatures.
7. But those who have believed and have done right
are the best of creatures.
8. Their reward is with their Lord:
the Gardens of Eden under which the rivers flow
where they shall abide for ever.
God is satisfied with them,
and they are satisfied with Him.
This is for those who fear their Lord!

V. 1: "Clear Evidence" is the Koran or the Prophet who brings the Evidence. At first, the Prophet tried to win over his tribe, the Quraish, and other Arabian idolaters. Then he fought against Jews and Christians. The three faiths agree that 1) God is One and eternal; 2) man was created by God; 3) the dead will be raised and judged; 4) the Angels and Satan influence man's life; 5) God knows the fate of each man; 6) the Scripture is a divine Revelation; 7) God has promised a Savior or Comforter. The Christians believe that the Savior is Jesus, the Muslims that he will be the long-awaited Mahdi, and the Jews are still waiting for his coming.

"Clear Evidence" is the nearest translation of **bayina**. The title of a sura is not considered to be a part of the sacred text and some authors complicate the matter by replacing traditional names by newly invented names like "The Testament" for S.98 (TC).

SURA 39 THE CROWDS. ***The title of sura S.39 "al-zoomar" (crowds or groups) comes from vv. 71 and 73, which announce that people will enter the Hereafter in troops. Addressed to polytheists and, particularly to Christian sects, the sura proclaims the unity and perfection of God's Design.***

39. THE CROWDS
Meccan, 75 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. This Scripture is from God, the Mighty, the Wise.

2* We have sent down to you the Scripture in Truth,
so worship God with sincere devotion.
3. Is not sincere devotion due to God?

But those who seek other protectors, say:
"We worship them only
to let them bring us closer to God!"
Verily, God will judge their differences,
God will not guide the liars and the renegades.

4. Had God wished a son for Himself,
He would have surely chosen the one He wanted
from among those He had created.
Glory to Him! He is God, the One, the Victorious.

5. He has created the Heavens and the earth in Truth.
He wraps the night around the day
and the day around the night.
He has subjected to Himself the sun and the moon,
and they both complete their course in a definite time.
Is He not the Mighty, the Forgiving?

6* He has created you from one soul,
and from her He drew out her mate.

He has sent down to you eight heads of cattle in pairs.
He has created you in the wombs of your mothers,
creation after creation in three layers of darkness.
Such is God, your Lord, the Sovereign of the Kingdom.
There is no god but Him — then, why are you turning away?
7* If you disbelieve, then, verily, God does not need you!
He does not approve of disbelief among His servants,
but He does accept your gratitude.
No one carrying a burden
should carry someone else's burden.
At the end you shall return to your Lord
and He will tell you the truth about your deeds.
Verily, He knows what is in the hearts!

8. When harm touches a man,
he calls to his Lord in repentance.
But as soon as [God] grants him His favor,
he forgets that he used to pray to Him
and sets up rivals to God,
leading [others] away from His path.

Say:
"Enjoy your disbelief a little longer:
verily, you'll be dwelling in the Fire!"
9. But not the one who worships in the hours of the night,
prostrating himself or standing up,
who cares about the Hereafter
and hopes for the mercy of his Lord.
Say:
"Do those who know resemble those who do not know?"
This is a Reminder for those who understand!
10. Say:
"O believing servants, fear your Lord!
Goodness is due to those who do goodness in this world.
Wide is the land of God, but only those who persevere
shall receive a reward without measure!"
11. Say:
"I'm ordered to worship God with sincere devotion.
12. I'm ordered to be the first among Muslims!"
13. Say:
"If I disobeyed my Lord,
I'd fear the punishment of the great Day!"
14. Say:
"I worship God with sincere devotion,
15. but you may worship whatever you wish besides Him."
Say:
"Verily, on Judgment Day the losers will be
those who lose their souls and their kin —
that will be a great loss!"
16. There will be layers of Fire above and beneath them.
This is how God warns His servants:
— O My servants! Fear Me!

17* There will be good news for those who spurn the idols,
and turn to God instead of worshiping them.
So announce the good news to My servants —
18* to those who listen to the Word
and follow the best of it,
to those whom God has guided and who can understand.

19. Can you save someone who has been sentenced to punishment
and is already in the Fire?
20. But for those who are fearful of their Lord,
there are mansions built upon mansions
with rivers flowing underneath.
Such is God's promise to them,
and God does not break His promises!

21. Do you not see how God sends water down from the sky
and makes it reappear from under the soil in springs,
how He produces with its help crops of different colors
which wither and turn yellow before your eyes,
and which He finally turns to dry stubble.
Verily, there is a Reminder in this
for those who understand!

22* The one whose heart God has opened to Islam
receives the Light of his Lord.
But woe to those, whose hearts are hardened
against the remembrance of God — they are in deep error!

23* God has sent down this Scripture
as the best narrative made of similar and repeated parts.
It makes the skin of the God-fearing creep!
But at the remembrance of God,
their skins and their hearts relax.
Such is God's way and He leads on it anyone He wills.
But the one God allows to go astray
will be left without a guide.

24. [Woe to] the one who on Resurrection Day
will meet the evil punishment face to face!
The wrong-doers will be told:
— Have a taste of what you have deserved!
25* Indeed, others before them had disbelieved,
and punishment came upon them
from whence they least expected.
26. God lets them taste humiliation in this life,
but harsher will be the punishment in the Hereafter,
if they [only] knew!

27* We bring up in this Koran all kinds of analogies
for the people — perhaps they will remember.

28. [This is] an Arabic Koran
with no crookedness in it —
perhaps they will fear God!

29* God gives the example of two men:
one has several masters who contend with each other,
and the other has only one master.
Are they equal in this example?
Thank God, no! But most of them do not know [it].

30. — [O Muhammad!] Truly, you will die,
and truly, they will die.
31. And truly, on Resurrection Day,
you shall continue to argue in your Lord's Presence.
32. Who does more evil than the one who lies about God
and rejects the Truth when it comes to him?
Is there not enough space in Hell for all the disbelievers?

33. But those who come with the Truth
and support it are the God-fearing.
34. They shall receive from their Lord everything they want —
such is the reward for those who do good!
35. God will absolve them from the worst of their deeds
and reward them for the best of their deeds.
36. Is not God sufficient for His servant?

They try to scare you by other [gods] besides Him!
Those whom God has allowed to stray will not have a guide.
37. But of those who are guided by God, no one shall go astray!
Then is not God almighty, the Lord of Retribution?

38. If you asked them:
"Who has created the Heavens and the earth?"
they would surely say:
"God."
Say:
"Then think, are those you call to besides God
capable of protecting me against God's punishment
if God decided to chastise me?
Or are they able to delay His Grace
if God decided to grant me a favor?"
Say:
"God is sufficient for me. Let all the trustful trust Him!"
39. Say:
"O my people! Do what you want,
and I'll do [what I want], but soon you'll know
40. to whom shall come a humiliating punishment,
upon whom an everlasting retribution shall descend!"

41. — [O Muhammed!] We have sent down to you
a Scripture with the Truth [as a Guidance] for the people.
Whoever accepts Guidance, benefits from it,
and whoever goes astray, harms himself.
And you are not their caretaker!

42* God calls to Himself the souls that leave their bodies
and retains those destined to die.
He returns the others till the appointed term.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who think.
43. How can they take protectors besides God?
Say:
"Especially as [these protectors] don't own anything
and have no understanding!"
44. Say:
"God is the omnipotent Intercessor.
To Him belongs the Dominion of Heavens and earth,
and to Him will be your return."
45. The hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter
constrict at the mention of One God,
but at the mention of other [gods] besides Him,
they are filled with joy.
46. Say:
"O God! The Creator of Heavens and earth,
Who knows the Hidden and the revealed:
only You can judge the disputes between Your servants!"

47. If the wrong-doers owned everything on earth
and even twice as much, they would have offered it all
as ransom for the evil punishment on Resurrection Day.
But they shall receive from God

something they do not expect!
48. They shall see the evil of their actions,
and they shall be engulfed
by what they have been laughing at.

49. When an affliction touches a man, he calls to Us,
but after receiving a favor from Us, he says:
"I've received it for my Knowledge!"
No! This is just to test them,
and most of them do not understand [it].

50. Their predecessors used to speak like them,
but they did not benefit from what they had amassed.
51. The evil of their deeds came crashing upon them.
The evil of their deeds shall crash
upon the sinners among them — they shall not elude [it]!

52. Do they not know that God increases or restricts
the provisions of anyone He wills?
Verily, there are Signs in this
for the people who believe!
53. Say:
"O servants [of God]!
If you've sinned against your souls,
don't despair of the mercy of God —
verily, God forgives all sins.
He's the Forgiving, the Merciful.
54. Turn to your Lord and become Muslims
before the punishment comes upon you,
and you're left without help!
55. Follow the best of what your Lord
has revealed to you before retribution hits you
so suddenly that you are caught unawares.
56. Then [your] soul won't have to say:
'Woe to me for being heedless of God
and for joining the scoffers!'
57. Then you won't have to say:
'Had God guided me, I would've feared God!'
58. Then you won't have to say
at the sight of the punishment:
'If I were brought back, I'd be among those who do good!'"

59. Yes! My Signs have already reached you,
but you rejected them and in your pride
you have joined the disbelievers!
60. On Resurrection Day you will see the faces
of those who repudiated God turning black.
Will there not be enough space in Hell
for [all] the arrogant?
61* God will lead the God-fearing to their place of salvation.
Evil shall not touch them, and they shall not grieve.
62. God is the Creator of everything,
the Caretaker of all affairs,

63. Who holds the keys to Heavens and earth.
Those who reject the Signs of God shall be the losers.
64. Say:
"How can you urge me to worship someone besides God?
O you, ignorant people!"

65. Has it not been inspired to you and to your predecessors
that if you became Associators,
then fruitless would be your work
and you would be among the losers!
66. So worship God and be grateful [to Him]!

67. They do not appreciate God at His true worth, yet,
on Judgment Day He will hold the whole earth in His fist,
and the Heavens will be rolled up in His right hand!
Glory to Him! Exalted He is above whatever they associate!

68. When the trumpet is blown,
everyone in Heavens and earth shall pass out,
everyone, except those for whom God rules [otherwise].
Another blow, and they will stand up and look around.
69. The earth shall glow with the Light of its Lord,
and the Book [of Records] shall be opened.
The Prophets and the witnesses shall be brought forth,
and judgment shall be pronounced between them in Truth —
they shall not be wronged!
70. Each soul shall be paid in full for what she had done.
[God] is fully aware of their deeds.

71. The disbelievers shall be driven to Hell in crowds.
When they arrive, its gates shall be opened wide,
and its Keepers shall say:
"Haven't any Messengers from your midst
come to you to recite the Verses of your Lord
and warn you about the meeting of this Day?"
They will say:
"Yes, [they did]!"
But the punitive sentence
will have already been passed upon the disbelievers.
72. They shall be told:
— Enter the gates of Hell and stay therein for ever!
Bad shall be this abode for the arrogant!

73. And those who feared God
shall be escorted to Paradise in crowds.
When they arrive, its gates shall be opened wide,
and its Keepers shall say:
"Peace upon you! You have fared well!
Come inside and stay here for ever!"
74. They will say:
"Praised be God!
He kept His promise by letting us inherit the earth.
Now we'll settle in Paradise as we please.
What an excellent reward for those who have toiled!"

75* You shall see the Angels surrounding the Throne,
singing praises to their Lord!
Judging will be by the Truth, and it shall be proclaimed:
"Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!"

V. 2: The expression **bil-haqq** (in Truth, truly, verily) is an enhancer akin to an oath.

V. 6: The four kinds of animals are camels, cows, sheep and goats. The three layers of darkness around the fetus are the abdomen, the uterus, and the fetal membrane.

V. 7: The Koran insists that every man must carry his burden (his responsibilities and his sins) himself without the help of others. The New Testament is not clear on this point: comp. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:2), and then: "For every man shall bear his own burden." (Gal. 6:5).The idea of an intermediate between man and his Creator is foreign to Islam, be the go-between a "saint" or a priest. Therefore, confession of sins in exchange for redemption is not legitimate: nobody on earth can lift the burden of sins in the name of God, the only intercessor being God Himself (v. 44).

V. 17: The Koran calls this idol (or idols) **Taghut**. This word can also stand for idolatry itself.

Man is free to choose between right and wrong, provided his choice does not conflict with God's Design.

V. 18: Besides its direct meaning, God's Word has another connotation that can be understood only by those who are highly developed spiritually.

V. 22: Similarly, in the New Testament God gives Light to the people. "Then Jesus said unto them: Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While you have light, believe in the light..." (John, 22: 35-36). Apparently, Jesus knew that the light would not last very long.

V. 23: The Koran says about itself that it is made of similar and repeated parts, but its reality resides in its totality.

If a single word in it is changed or replaced, it will cease to be the Holy Koran. The Koran is known only in one version, the original Arabic one, that will never change even if the last person to know Arabic disappears from the face of earth. The Koran was revealed at a definite place and time, and its assessment of other religions is valid for the time of its promulgation and not necessarily for our time. It is considered that Islam is for ever, but other religions appear and disappear.

V. 25: What have they denied, the Message or the Prophets?

V. 27: "Analogies" — examples, comparisons, or similes.

V. 29: It is better to worship one God than several gods who could fight among themselves, just as it is better to serve one master than several masters ad odds with one another.

V. 42: The soul leaves a person during sleep and returns, sometimes enriched by dreams and visions, when the person wakes up.

V. 61: "Salvation" or "place of victory" (**mafazat**).

V. 75: Cf. the first words of the Koran (S.1:2).

SURA 62 THE ASSEMBLY. ***This short sura blames the Jews for refusing to join Islam.***

It prescribes a weekly communal prayer and exhorts the believers to take their religion seriously.

62. THE ASSEMBLY
Meccan, 11 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Everything in Heavens and earth
glorifies God — the Sovereign, the Holy One,
the Mighty, the Wise.

2* He is the One, Who has sent to common folks
a Messenger from their midst
to read them His Verses, to purify them,
and to teach them the Scripture and Wisdom.
Indeed, they were in obvious error before,
3. like the others who had not joined them yet.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

4. Such is God's bounty,
which He grants to anyone He wills:
indeed, God is the owner of great mercy.

5* And what about those
who have been trusted with the Torah
and failed to follow it?
They are like asses loaded with books!
Demeaning is this likeness for the people
who reject the Signs of God.
God does not guide the people who do wrong!
6* Say:
"O you who have rallied to the Jews!
If you pretend to be the only people close to God,
then wish to die if you're telling the truth!"
7. But they will never wish it,
knowing what their hands have brought forth.
God knows well those who do wrong!
8. Say:
"Death that you're trying to avoid
shall surely overtake you,
and you'll returned to the One,
Who knows the concealed and the revealed,
and He'll tell you what you have done!"

9* O you who believe!
At the call to the assembly for the Friday prayer,
leave [your] trade and hasten to the remembrance of God.
If you only knew how beneficial it is for you!
10. Disperse in the land after the prayer
to search for God's bounty, and remember God oftentimes —
perhaps you will be successful!

11. But as soon as they see some bargain or some fun,
they rush into it, leaving you standing where you stood!

Say:
"What is with God is better than fun or bargain,
indeed, God is the best of providers!"

V. 2: "Common folks" or "ignorant people" who lived before the advent of Islam.

V. 5: An ass can carry books, but books cannot add to its wisdom.

V. 6: If you're so close to God, why don't you try to meet Him as soon as possible? Or, if you're so certain of your salvation, why do you cling to life on earth?

V. 9: In Arabic "Friday" means "assembly." Friday is a special day: the last day of Creation was Friday, and it was on Friday that the Prophet Muhammad entered Medina (mid-April 622). Most Muslims hold their communal weekly prayer in mosques on Friday morning.

Prayer — one of the pillars of Islam — is a serious duty for all Muslims. The weekly communal prayer is announced by the call **(izan)** of the muezzin. The faithful report to the mosque or to an open space and range themselves in rows facing the direction of Mecca. At the prompt of the man who leads the prayer **(imam)**, the congregation performs a combination of acts such as standing, bowing, and prostrating, while reciting the obligatory sacramental invocations. These acts are done in unison to symbolize the unity of spirit and purpose among the faithful.

Participation in the Friday prayer requires that the worshiper be in a state of spiritual purity. To achieve it, he must meditate before the prayer on the generosity of God and the splendor of His Creation, and perform a full-body ritual ablution **(ghusl)** that can be reduced to washing the face, hands and feet in some situations. The giving of alms also contributes to ritual purification.

SURA 32 ADORATION. ***S.32 is short and simple. It admonishes those who doubt the Koran and criticizes the Jews without mentioning the Associators.***

32. A D O R A T I O N

Meccan, 30 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim.
2. [This is] the Revelation of a Scripture
which cannot be doubted —
it is from the Lord of the Worlds.

3. They say:
"[Muhammad] invented it!"
No! It is the Truth from your Lord to warn a people
that no Warner had ever visited before —
perhaps they will accept Guidance!

4. God created the Heavens and earth
and what is between in six days;
then He sat on the Throne.
You have no helper and no intercessor besides Him,
why do you not remember [it]?

5* He manages all affairs from Heaven to earth.

They ascend to Him in a Day
that lasts a thousand years by your count.
6. He knows the hidden and the open,
He is the Mighty, the Compassionate.

7. He brings everything He creates to perfection.
First He created man from clay,
8. then He made his progeny
from an extract of a lowly fluid.
9* Then He proportioned him
and breathed into him of His Spirit.
He gave you hearing, sight and a heart,
but how small is your gratitude!

10. They say:
“Is it possible that after the earth consumes us,
we’ll return in a new Creation?”
This is how they deny the meeting with their Lord!

1. Say:
“The Angel of death responsible for you
will receive your souls,
and you’ll be returned to your Lord.”
12. If you could see how the sinners
hanging their heads before their Lord:
“O our Lord! We saw and we heard everything.
Send us back, and we’ll be acting uprightly,
for [now] we are convinced!”
13. [God will say]:
— Had We so willed, We would have guided every soul.
But My Word will come true,
and I will fill Hell with all of you, both Jinn and men!
14. Let you taste [of it] for having forgotten
the meeting of this Day of yours!
And now We will forget you,
so taste the everlasting punishment for your deeds!

15* Those who believe in Our Verses
prostrate themselves
when they are read to them.
They praise their Lord
and do not bristle with pride.
16. They raise their sides from their couches
and call onto their Lord with fear and hope.
They contribute from what We have given to them.
17. No soul can know what delight for their eyes
is prepared as a reward for their deeds!

18. Is a believer like a reprobate?
No! They are not alike!
19. Those who believed and did good works
will receive Gardens as a haven
for what they had done,

20. but the reprobates shall abide in the Fire!
Each time they will try to escape from it,
they shall be returned with the words:
— Taste the punishment!
This is the Fire you used to deny!
21. We will make them taste a punishment in this life
before the greater punishment [in Hell] —
perhaps they will repent!

22. Who does a greater wrong than the one
who turns away from the Verses of his Lord
when they are recited to him.
Verily, We will retaliate against the sinners!

23* In the past We gave the Scripture to Moses.
We made it a Guidance for the Sons of Israel.
So have no doubts about your meeting with Him.
24. As long as they were patient
and believed in Our Signs,
We have been appointing imams from their midst
who guided them under Our command.
25. Verily, on Resurrection Day
your Lord will judge their disagreements!

26. Is it not a lesson for them
that We had destroyed many generations in the past?
Do they not walk in [the ruins of] their houses?
Verily, there are Signs in this —
so why do they not listen?

27. Do they not see how We irrigate the barren land
and how We use water to produce crops
that feed them and their cattle?
Do they not see [it]?

28. They say:
"When is the Decision due if you're telling the truth?"
29. Say:
"When the disbelievers will believe on Decision Day,
it'll be too late for their faith to help them,
and they shall receive no reprieve!"

30* So turn away from them and wait,
and let them wait [as well]!

V. 5: Time has a different meaning and a different duration in the Unseen and in this world (S.56:4, S.44:17). Cf. "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God required that which is past" (Eccl. 3:15). Being an absolute reality, God is outside any relative dimension of time and space.

V. 9: He "breathed into ***him*** of His Spirit. He gave ***you*** hearing, sight and a heart." Before it receives the Spirit, the embryo is spoken of in the third person; after that it becomes a human being and is addressed to in the second person.

V. 15: Signs can be ***displayed*** as events or sights, or ***recited*** as Verses (S.7:73, S.86:33).

V. 23: "Have no doubts about your meeting with Him." Other possible variants: "Have no doubts about it reaching you or "reaching him [Moses]."

V. 30: Cf. "Wait and I'll be waiting with you" (S.7:71).

SURA 64 LOSS AND GAIN. ***S.64 resembles S.32 in length and content. It is called sometimes "Mutual Deceit," without apparent justification.***

64. LOSS AND GAIN

Medinan, 18 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Everything in Heavens and earth glorifies God!
To Him belongs the Kingdom and the Glory.
He has power over everything!

2. He is the One, Who has created you.
Some of you disbelieve, and others believe.
God observes everything you do!
3. He has created the Heavens and the earth in Truth.
He gave you shape,
He perfected your image,
and to Him is your return!
4. He knows what is in Heavens and earth,
and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal —
God is well aware of what is in the hearts!

5. Has not an account of those
who disbelieved in the past reach you?
They tasted the evil of their deeds
and suffered a painful punishment.
6. When Our Messengers came to them with the Proofs,
they said:
"Is it possible that we'll be led by men?"
They disbelieved and turned away.
But God can do without them —
indeed, God is rich and praiseworthy!

7. The disbelievers think that they will never be raised.
Say:
"Yes! By my Lord, you ***will*** be raised
and you'll be told about your deeds —
that's easy for God!"
8* So believe in God and His Messenger,
and in the Light We have descended upon you.
God is well aware of your deeds!

9. The Day He brings you together
will be the Day of Gathering,
the Day of Loss and Gain.
To anyone who has believed in God and did good works,
He will forgive his sins and admit him into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide in them for ever.
That shall be a great success!
10. But the disbelievers who rejected Our Signs,
shall be the inmates of the Fire
and shall dwell in it for ever — what an evil outcome!
11. No disaster strikes you without God's permission!
If someone believes in God,
He will guide his heart on the right path —
indeed, God is aware of everything!
12. So obey God and obey the Messenger!
But if you turn away...
then, upon our Messenger,
there is only a clear proclamation!
13. God! There is no god, but Him,
so let [all] the believers rely upon God!

14* O, you who have believed!
Verily, among your wives and children,
some are hostile to you, so beware of them!
But if you relent, forbear, and forgive...
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
15. Your wealth and your children
are just a temptation for you,
but the great reward is with God.
16* Fear God as much as you can, listen and obey,
and contribute for the sake of your souls!
Successful will be those
who restrain the greed of their soul!

17. If you lend God a good loan,
He will double it and forgive you —
indeed, God is appreciative and commiserating!
18. He knows the hidden and the revealed;
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

V. 8: "The Light We have descended upon you" — the light of reason and conscience, the light of the Koran.

Vv. 14-15: Both wealth and children are God's blessings, but they may also be a test on His part.

V. 16: "Contribute for...your souls," i.e., give to charity.

SURA 14 ABRAHAM. ***This sura, replete with Warning passages, comprises a section on Moses and other Messengers (vv. 6-14) and a passage on Abraham in the form of a fervent prayer (vv. 35-41).***

14. A B R A H A M
Meccan, 52 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam ra.
[This is] a Scripture We have sent down to you,
so that by permission of their Lord,
you lead mankind from darkness into light,
on the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy —
2. of God, the Owner of everything in Heavens and earth.

Woe to the disbelievers because of the mighty punishment!
3. Indeed, they love the present life
more than they long for the Hereafter;
they divert [others] from the way of God
and try to make it crooked — they are far astray!

4* We have been sending a Messenger
only to give clear explanations
in the language of his people.
God sends astray anyone He wills,
and guides anyone He wills.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

5. We sent Moses with Our Signs:
— Bring your people from darkness into light
and remind them of God's days.
There are Signs in this
for all the patient and thankful.

6. Moses said to his people:
"Remember God's favor to you.
He saved you from the people of Pharaoh
who imposed upon you an evil punishment
by killing your sons and sparing your women.
This was a mighty test from your Lord."
7. Then your Lord proclaimed:
— If you are grateful,
I will increase [my favors] to you,
but terrible shall be My punishment if you're ungrateful!

8. Moses said:
"Even if you and all the people on earth
are ungrateful, then, verily,
God will remain rich and praiseworthy!"

9* Has not an account of the people
of the past reach you: of Noah,
of the peoples of 'Ad and Thamood,
and of those who came after them
and are known only to God?

Their Messengers had been coming to them with Proofs,
but, covering their mouths with their hands,
they used to say:
"We deny everything you've been sent with
and we have strong doubts
about what you're calling us to!"
10. The Messengers said:
"How can one have doubts about God,
the Creator of Heavens and earth,
Who calls you to forgive your sins
and respites you till the appointed time?"
They said:
"You're people like us!
If you want to turn us away
from what our fathers used to worship,
then come to us with a clear mandate!"
11. The Messengers said:
"Yes, we are people like you,
but God bestows [His] favor upon the servants He chooses.
We can't show you [our] power without God's permission.
Let all the believers trust in God!
12. How shall we not trust in God
if He is the One, Who guided us on our path?
We'll patiently endure your abuse —
let those who trust put their trust in God!"

13. Then the disbelievers said to their Messengers:
"We'll expel you from our land
if you don't return to our creed!"
But God inspired [the Messengers]:
— We will destroy those who do wrong
14. and We will settle you on this land after them.
This is for those who fear standing before Me
and who dread My threat.

15* [The Messengers] asked for a victory,
and every stubborn sinner was defeated.

16. Before him is Hell, where he shall drink fetid water!
17. He will gulp it up, but will hardly swallow it.
Death shall assail him from every side.
Yet he shall not die: before him will be a punishment
that will never end.

18. The deeds of those who disbelieve in their Lord
are like ashes in a furious wind on a stormy day.
They have no control over what they have earned —
see, how far they are astray!

19. Do you not see that God has created
the Heavens and earth in Truth?
If He only wished, He would remove you
and replace you with a new Creation —

20. that will not be difficult for God!
21. When they are all brought before God,
the weak shall say to the arrogant:
"We've followed you, now divert from us
at least a part of God's punishment!"
And [the arrogant] shall say:
"Had God guided us, we would've guided you in turn.
[Now] it's the same for us if we lament or we endure —
indeed, we don't have a way out!"

22* After sentencing, Satan shall say:
"Verily, God has fulfilled His promise.
I've also made promises, but I deceived you —
indeed, I had no authority over you.
I've only motioned to you, and you obeyed,
so don't blame me, but blame yourselves!
I can't help you, and you can't help me;
and I disavow your associating me [with God]."
Verily, a painful punishment is [in store] for the unjust!

23. But those who have believed and have done good works
shall enter the Gardens under which the rivers flow.
They shall dwell therein for ever by leave of their Lord.
The greeting there is "Peace!"

24. Do you not see how God comes up with comparisons?
A good word is like a good tree
with firmly planted roots and branches to the sky!
25. When the time comes, it produces edible fruit
by permission of its Lord.
God comes up with such comparisons to people —
perhaps they will come to their senses!

26. But a bad word is like a bad tree
whose roots can be [easily] pulled from the ground
because it is not [anchored] securely.

27. By [His] true Word God strengthens
those who believed in this life and the Hereafter.
As for the sinners, God allows them to lose their way —
God does what He wills!

28. Have you not seen those who traded God's mercy for disbelief
and sent their people to the place of perdition —
29. to Hell, where they shall be burnt.
Dreadful is this abode!
30. They set up equals to God to divert [others] from His way.
Say:
"Enjoy yourselves, but, verily,
your destination is straight into the Fire!"

31. Tell My believing servants to observe the prayer
and to give alms openly or secretly

from the sustenance We are providing them with
till the coming of the Day,
when there shall be neither trade nor friendship!

32. God is the One, Who has created Heavens and earth.
He sends down from the sky the rain
with which He grows fruit for your sustenance.
He is the One, Who has submitted to you
the ships that sail on the sea by His command.
He has subjected the rivers to you.
33. He has subjected to you the sun and the moon,
and each follows its course.
He has subjected to you the night and the day.
34. He gives you everything you ask for.
And if you [start] counting all of God's favors,
you will never end counting them!
But, verily, man is unjust and ungrateful!

35* And Abraham said:
"**O my Lord!**
Make this city secure
and keep me and my sons from worshiping idols.
36. O my Lord!
They've surely led many people astray!
The one who follows me is with me,
and the one who disobeys me...
verily, You're forgiving and merciful!

37. O our Lord!
I've settled some of my offspring
in a barren valley by Your holy House
to let them, o our Lord, observe the prayer.
So fill the people's hearts with love for them
and feed them with fruit —
then, perhaps they will be thankful!
38. O our Lord!
You know what we conceal and what we reveal —
indeed, nothing is hidden from God on earth or in Heaven.
39. Praised be God, Who gave me Ishmael and Isaac in my old age.
Verily, my Lord is the Hearer of prayer!
40. O my Lord!
Make me and my offspring the keepers of prayer,
and accept my prayer, o our Lord!
41. O our Lord!
Forgive me, my parents, and [all] the believers
on the Day when reckoning is due!"

42. Do not think that God is indifferent
to the actions of the transgressors.
He is only reprieving them till the Day
when with horrified stares
43* they will rush ahead, their heads turned up,
their eyes transfixed, and their hearts emptied out!

44. Warn the people about the Day when the punishment comes
and the wrong-doers will say:
"O our Lord!
Give us a short reprieve,
and we'll respond to Your call and follow the Messengers!"
— But have you not sworn before
that you will never retreat?
45* When you lived in the houses
of those who wronged themselves,
have you not been shown how We had dealt with them?
Indeed, We have given you [many] examples!

46. They were scheming their schemes,
but God had their schemes in His sight,
even if their schemes were such as to move mountains!
47. Do not expect God to break the promise
He made to His Messengers.
Verily, mighty is God, the wielder of retribution!

48* On the Day when the earth becomes another earth,
and the Heavens follow suit,
they shall appear before God, the One, the Victorious.

49. On that Day you shall see the sinners bound in chains,
50. clothed in pitch, their faces covered with Fire!
51. God will reward every soul according to her deeds.
Verily, God is quick at reckoning!

52. This is a Message for all the people.
Let it be a Warning to them,
let them know that He is One God!
And let those who understand come to their senses!

V. 4: This is an answer to those who complained that the language of the Koran was not that of any other Scripture. The Koran is known in its original version, while the Bible and the New Testament are accessible to believers only as translations from one language to another. Some Muslims, even those who do not know Arabic, insist that the Koran should be read only in Arabic — the language God chose for His Message (one can also say that God chose Arabic because it was the language of those He wanted to reach).

V. 9: They spoke "covering their mouths with their hands," or "sticking their hands into their mouths." According to this verse, 'Ad and Thamood preceded the Exodus.

V. 15: Both the Messengers and the disbelievers wanted to win.

V. 22: "I disavow your associating me [with God]." Other translators have rendered Satan's simple words differently:

"I never believed that I was His equal with whom ye joined me" (JMR).

"Lo! I disbelieved in that which you before ascribed to me" (MMP).

"I never thought, as you did, that I was God's equal" (NJD).

"I had already beforehand rebelled against God with Whom you associated me" (AYA, in notes).

Because of the different nature of time in the Unseen (S.32:5) and of the unlimited mercy of God, it is possible that not only all the sinners, but Satan himself will be pardoned in the end. The Koran does not speak of a periodic destruction and re-creation of the world, yet some Muslim scholars think that such events are possible because of the teaching of renovation (**bid'a**), which is rejected by Islamic sects outside the mainstream of Islam, especially the Wahhabites of Saudi Arabia and Iranian Shi'ites. These sects forcefully defend the continuity of the social mores and cults of early Islam. In so doing, they overstep the Koran and invent new oppressive rules, such as the prohibition to women to ever leave their homes or drive a car.

V. 35: This city is Mecca.

V. 43: "Their hearts emptied out," or "filled with air."

V. 45: The ruined houses of the cities of 'Ad and Thamood.

V. 48: The world as it is known to us will be replaced on Judgment Day by a new spiritual realm.

SURA 2 (I) THE COW. ***S.2, the longest sura of the Koran, consists of 286 verses, some of which are inordinarily long and prose-like. Some parts of the sura recall the earlier period by their style, but most of the material postdates the battle of Badr (2 H) and the final break between the Muslim and Jewish communities.***

In content and tone, S.2 can be smoothly divided into the general purpose Part I (vv. 1-162) and the legislative Part II (vv. 163-286). At v.163 there is a pause signaling the transition.

Omitting short Warning and Sign passages and verses supporting the authority of Messengers, Part I can be summarized as follows:

1) Introduction: contrast between the Muslims and the disbelievers with a Warning to the Associators (vv. 1-24).

2) The story of Adam and Iblis (vv. 30-38) and a lengthy criticism of the Jews (vv. 30-103) that includes the stories of Moses (vv. 49-61; 67-73) and Abraham (vv. 124-133), and a condemnation of the Christians as Associators.

3) Conclusion: instructions on praying (vv. 142-150) and Admonitions that include the late topics of dying in the cause of God and pilgrimage to Mecca (vv. 151-162).

Some commentators believe that the Prophet himself wanted to start the Scripture with this compendium of ideas. S.2 may produce a strong impression on anyone already initiated to the Koran.

2. THE COW
Meccan, 286 verses

PART I. (VV. 1-162)

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim.
2. This is a Scripture that raises no doubts!
   It is a Guidance for the God-fearing

3* who believe in the Unseen, observe the prayer,
   and contribute from what We have given to them.

4. They believe in what has been sent down to you
   and in what has been sent down before you,

and they are sure of the Hereafter.
5. They are of those who follow their Lord's Guidance
and they will prosper!
6. As for the disbelievers, warn them or warn them not,
they will not believe!
7. God has sealed their hearts and ears,
and veiled their eyes.
A great punishment [is in store] for them!

8. Some people say:
"We believe in God and the Last Day!"
But they do not believe!
9. They want to deceive God and the believers,
but they deceive only themselves and do not understand [it].
10* There is sickness in their hearts,
and God aggravates their sickness.
A painful punishment is [in store] for their lies.
11. When told:
"Don't spread corruption in the land,"
they say:
"Truly, we're doing nothing but goodness!"
12. They spread corruption and do not understand [it].
13. When told:
"Believe like the others believe,"
they say:
"Why should we believe like the fools who believe?"
But no! ***They*** are the fools, and they do not know [it]!

14* Upon meeting the believers they say:
"We believe!"
But left alone with their Satans, they say:
"We're on your side, we were only joking!"
15. God will turn their jokes against them
and increase their error
so that they will wander blindly in it!
16. They are of those who have traded Guidance for error;
but this trade will not benefit them,
and they will lose the way.

17. They are like [people] who kindle a fire.
After it lits up the surroundings,
God takes their light away and leaves them in the dark,
so that they do not see anything!
18. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they cannot turn back.

19. A cloud loaded with rain has appeared in the sky.
It carries darkness, thunder and lightning.
Scared to death by the thunderclaps,
they plug their ears with their fingers.
This is how God will surround the disbelievers!
20. Lightning almost blinds them.
When it lights up their way, they go ahead,
but when darkness grows on them, they stand still.

If God so willed,
He would have taken away their hearing and sight!
Verily, God has power over all things!

21. O people! Worship your Lord,
Who has created you and your predecessors —
perhaps you will fear God!
22. [Worship] the One,
Who has spread for you the earth like a carpet,
Who has made the sky like a canopy,
Who has poured water down from the sky
and produced with its help fruits for your sustenance.
Do not associate rivals with God
now that [the Truth] has come to you!
23* If you have doubts
about what We have revealed to Our servant,
then come up with a sura like this one
and call your witnesses besides God
if you are telling the truth.
24* But if you do not do it — and you cannot do it,
then beware of the Fire prepared for the disbelievers
that shall be fueled with people and rocks.

25* Announce to those who have believed and done right
that there are Gardens for them under which the rivers flow.
Therein, each time they get some fruit, they will say:
"That's what we've been given before."
But the resemblance is only apparent!
They shall be accompanied by their pure spouses,
and they shall abide therein for ever.

26* Verily, God is not above using a gnat
as an example, or what is larger than it.
The believers know that this is the Truth from their Lord,
while the disbelievers say:
"What does God mean by this example?"
He uses it to send many [people] astray
and to guide many others.
But He sends astray only the reprobates
27. who violate the Covenant with God after accepting it.
They separate what God has commanded to join
and spread corruption in the land.
They are of those who shall sustain losses!

28. How can you deny God?
You were lifeless and He gave you life.
Then He will make you die, then He will revive you,
and in the end you shall return to Him.
29. He is the One, Who has created for you everything on earth.
Turning to the sky, He raised seven firmaments —
He is aware of everything!

30* Your Lord said to the Angels:

— I am going to appoint a regent on earth.
They said:
"Would You appoint someone
who will spread corruption on it and shed blood,
while we're singing Your praise
and glorify Your holy Name?"
[God] said:
— I know what you do not know.

31. [God] has taught Adam the names of all [things]
and, showing them to the Angels, He said:
— Tell Me their names if you know the truth.
32. They said:
"Glory to You! We have no other Knowledge
than the one You've imparted to us.
Verily, You're the Knowing, the Wise.
33. [God] said:
— O Adam! Tell them their names!
After he had named them, [God] said:
— Did I not tell you
that I know the secrets of Heavens and earth,
and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?
34. We told the Angels:
— Prostrate yourselves before Adam!
They all prostrated themselves, except Iblis,
who disobeyed and out of pride became a disbeliever.
35* We said:
— O Adam! Dwell in Paradise with your spouse.
Eat whatever and wherever you like,
but do not approach this tree, lest you become sinners.
36* But Satan caused them to stumble
and to lose the state they were in.
We said:
— Get out, all of you, and be enemies to one another!
Your dwelling place and your sustenance
shall be on earth, but only for a definite time.
37* Adam accepted the Words of His Lord, Who turned to him,
for He is the Yielding, the Merciful.

38. We said:
— Out of here, all of you!
Soon you shall receive My Guidance,
and whoever follows My Guidance
shall be free of fear and grief.
39. But those who disbelieve and reject Our Signs
shall be the inmates of the Fire for ever.

40. O Children of Israel!
Remember the mercy which I bestowed upon you
and fulfill your Covenant with Me,
as I fulfill My Covenant with you.
And fear Me!
41. Believe in what I have sent down to you

to confirm what you had already received.
Do not be among the first to deny it,
and do not sell My Signs for a small price.
And be wary of Me!
42* Do not cover the Truth with falsehood
and do not conceal the Truth
after it has become known to you.
43* Observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and bow with those who bow.
44. How can you urge the people to righteousness
if you neglect [it] yourselves,
albeit you recite the Scripture?
Do you not understand?
45. Seek help in patience and prayer!
Surely, this is difficult, but not for the unassuming one
46. who remembers that he will meet his Lord and return to Him.

47* O Children of Israel!
Remember that I have bestowed mercy upon you
and that I favored you over the Worlds.
48. Fear the Day when one soul
will not be able to assist [another] soul,
when she will be refused intercession,
when her ransom will not be accepted,
when nobody will receive any help.

49. We rescued you from the people of Pharaoh
who treated you harshly,
killing your sons and sparing your women.
That was a mighty test for you from your Lord!
50. Then, to save you, We parted the sea
and We drowned the people of Pharaoh in your sight.

51. We gave Moses forty nights [to meet with Us].
But in his absence you worshiped a calf
and became unjust.
52. Later on We forgave you,
hoping that you would be grateful.

53* We gave Moses the Scripture and the Assurance,
hoping that you would accept Guidance.

54* Moses said to his people:
"O my people!
You've wronged yourselves by worshiping the calf.
Now turn to your Creator and slay the guilty ones —
that will be better for you in your Creator's eyes
and He'll relent to you —
indeed, He's the Relentful, the Merciful."
55. And he got the reply:
"O Moses! We shall never believe you
till we see God face to face!"
But a thunderbolt hit you while you were looking!

56* We will raise you up after you die —
perhaps you will be grateful!

57. Then We gave you the shade of the clouds
and showered you with manna and quails:
— Eat of the good things We are providing you with!
They did not harm Us, but they harmed themselves.

58* And We said:
— Go to this town and eat there to your health
whatever you please, but do obeisance
while entering the gate and say "hittaton."
Then We will forgive your sins
and increase [the share] of those who do good.
59. But the wrong-doers replaced this word by another one.
For their perversion, We sent a pestilence
upon the sinners down from the sky!

60. And when Moses requested water for his people,
We said:
— Strike the rock with your staff!
Thereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it,
and every man knew from which to drink.
Eat and drink of God's provisions
and do not spread corruption in the land.

61* Then they said:
"O Moses! We're fed up eating the same food.
Call to your Lord in our behalf
and ask Him to grow for us some produce of the soil:
vegetables, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions,"
He said:
"Do you really want to swap the better for the worse?
Then return to Egypt
where you'll find what you're asking for."
Thus they called the wrath of God upon themselves.
They fell prey to misery and humiliation
for rejecting the Signs of God,
for killing His Prophets unjustly,
for rebelling and transgressing.

62* Verily, all the believers,
the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabi'un —
those who believed in God and the Last Day
and acted uprightly shall receive a reward from their Lord,
and shall neither fear nor grieve!

63* When We concluded a Covenant with you
and raised a mountain over you,
[We said]:
— Hold securely onto what We have given to you,
and remember everything [in the Covenant] —
perhaps you will become God-fearing!

64. But later on you turned away.
Had it not been for the Grace of God and His mercy to you,
you would have been among the losers.

65. Indeed, you knew who of you violated the Sabbath.
We said to them:
— Be despicable apes!
66. We made it an example for their times
and for those who followed them.
This was a lesson for the God-fearing!

67* When Moses said to his people:
"God enjoins you to sacrifice a cow."
They said:
"Are you laughing at us?"
[Moses] said:
"O God, preserve me from ignorance!"
68. They said:
"Call upon your Lord and ask Him to describe her!"
[Moses] said:
"A cow not too old and not too young, but of middle age.
Now, do as commanded!"
69. They said:
"Call upon your Lord and ask Him to specify her color!"
[Moses] said:
"A yellow cow, rich in color, a delight to the eyes."
70. They said:
"Call upon your Lord and ask Him to tell us
exactly what she looks like, because all cows are alike to us.
Then, God willing, we'll be on the right path!"

71. He said: "[God] says:
— A cow not broken in to plough the soil
or irrigate the cultures, and sound, without blemishes."
They said:
"Now, you have told us the [whole] truth!"
Upon that, they sacrificed her, but reluctantly.

72* When you killed a man and then argued about it,
God revealed what you were hiding.
73. We said:
— Strike him with a part of [the cow].
This is how God revives the dead
and shows you His Signs — perhaps you will understand!

74. Then your hearts became harder than rocks, or even harder.
But among the rocks there are some
through which springs gush forth
and some that produce water when split,
and some that collapse in fear of God.
God is not heedless of your deeds!

75. How can you expect [the Jews] to believe you

if some of them heard and understood the Word of God,
yet knowingly [continued to] pervert it?
76* When they meet the believers, they say:
"We believe,"
but in private they say to one another:
"Why shall you tell [the believers]
what God has revealed to you
if they argue with you about it before your Lord?"
Do you not understand?
77. Do they not realize that God knows
all that they conceal and all that they reveal?
78* Some of them are illiterate and, not knowing the Scripture,
abandon themselves to dreams and conjectures!

79* Woe to those who write a scripture with their hand
and then say:
"It's from God,"
only to sell it for a measly price.
Woe to them for what their hands are writing,
and woe to them for what they are earning!
80. They say:
"Even if the Fire touches us, it'll be only for a few days!"
Say:
"Hasn't God made you a promise,
and did God ever break His promise?
Then why do you say about God what you don't know?"
81. Yes! Those who enriched themselves through evil
and sank into sin shall be the inmates of the Fire
to abide in it for ever!
82. But those who believed and did right
shall be the dwellers of Paradise to abide in it for ever!

83. We have made a Covenant with the Children of Israel:
— Serve no one, but God.
Be kind to parents and relatives, to orphans and the needy.
Speak kindly to the people,
observe the prayer, and pay the zakat.
But you turned away and relapsed, except a few.

84* When We made a Covenant with you,
you agreed not to shed the blood [of your kin]
and not to expel one another from dwellings —
you are witnesses [to that]!
85. Now you kill one another, evict others from their homes,
and conspire against them in evil-doing and enmity.
And when they are returned to you as prisoners,
you ransom them, albeit you had exiled them unlawfully.

Why do you believe only in a part of the Scripture
and deny the rest?
Those who do it shall receive no reward,
but only disgrace in this life.
On Judgment Day they shall be submitted

to the harshest punishment —
God is not heedless of what you do!
86. Such people buy the life of this world
for the price of the Hereafter.
Their punishment shall not be reduced,
and they shall not be helped!

87. We gave a Scripture to Moses,
and We sent a succession of Messengers in his footsteps.
To Jesus, son of Mary, We gave the Proofs
and fortified him with the Holy Spirit.

Did you not make much of yourselves
whenever a Messenger brought you something you disliked?
Some of them you rejected, and some others you murdered.
88* [The Jews] say:
"Our hearts are covered."
God will curse them for their disbelief —
so tiny is their faith!

89* In the past they prayed for a victory over the disbelievers.
But when the Scripture from God came to them,
which they ought to have recognized
because it confirmed what had been given to them before,
they refused to believe in it.
Let the curse of God fall upon the disbelievers!

90. They sold their souls for a small price
when they denied what God had sent down to them.
They bring upon themselves wrath upon wrath
by resenting what God gives out of His favors
to those of His servants He pleases.
There is a shameful punishment for the disbelievers!
91* When told:
"Believe in what has been sent down by God,"
they say:
"We'll believe [only] in what has been revealed to us!"
They reject the rest, albeit it is true
and confirms what they already have.
Say:
"Why have you killed God's Prophets in the past,
if you were believers?"

92. Moses came to you with the Proofs,
but you worshiped a calf and fell into error.
93* When We concluded a Covenant with you,
We raised a mountain over you, saying:
— Hold tightly to what We have given to you, and listen!
But they said:
"We hear, but we won't obey!"
In their disbelief their hearts were drunk with the calf.
Say:
"Bad are the demands of your faith if such is your faith!"

94* Say:
"If the final abode with God is only for you,
but not for [all] people,
then wish yourselves to die if you're sincere!"
95. But they shall never wish it
because they know what their hands have brought forth.
God is well aware of the sinners!

96. — [O Muhammad!] You will find that of all the people
they are the most greedy for life,
even more so than the Associators.
Each of them would like to live a thousand years,
but even a long life shall not save them from punishment.
God observes everything they do!

97* Say:
"Every enemy of Gabriel who, by God's will,
has delivered [the Koran] into your heart
as a confirmation of the previous [Revelations],
and as a Guidance and good tidings for the believers...
98. every enemy of God, of His Angels, of His Messengers,
of Gabriel and Michael...
verily, God is the enemy of all the disbelievers.

99. We have sent down to you some clear Signs
that only the reprobates deny.
100* Each time they conclude a treaty, some of them violate it,
as most of them are disbelievers!
101* And when the Messenger of God came to them
to confirm what had been given to them before,
some of the People of the Scripture
threw the Scripture of God behind their backs,
as if they did not know!

102* They had learned from the Satans
some incantations against the power of Solomon.
But it was not Solomon, who denied [faith] —
the Satans denied [it].
They taught people sorcery
and what had been sent down in Babylon
to the Angels Harut and Marut.
But neither of them had ever taught anyone without warning:
"We're a temptation for you, don't deny [your] faith!"
They learned from them how to separate
a husband from his wife;
but they could not hurt anyone without God's permission.
They learned from them what harmed them
and not what benefited them.
Yet they knew that those who practice [sorcery]
shall be denied the bliss of the Hereafter.
If they [only] knew how small was the price
for which they sold their souls!

103. Had they believed and feared God, a reward from God
would have been better for them, if they [only] knew!

104*O you who believe!
Do not say [to the Prophet] "ra'ina",
but say "unzurna," and listen to him.
A painful punishment is [in store] for the disbelievers.
105. The disbelievers among the People of the Scripture
and the Associators do not want you to receive
any favors from your Lord.
But God singles out by His Grace anyone He pleases.
God is full of abundant Grace!

106*Each time We cancel a Verse [of the Koran],
or cause it to be forgotten,
We replace it by a better or a similar one.
Do you not know that God has power over everything?
107. Do you not know that it is God,
Who controls the Heavens and the earth
and that, besides Him, you have no protector and no helper?

108. Perhaps you want to question your Messenger,
as Moses had been questioned in the past?
But whoever trades belief for disbelief
has surely lost the right way!
109*After Truth became obvious to the People the Scripture,
many of them envied you and wanted to return you
to disbelief after you had come to faith.
Forgive them and forget until God accomplishes His purpose.
Verily, God has power over everything!

110*Observe the prayer and pay the zakat,
All the good you send forth for your souls,
you will find with God — verily, God sees everything you do!
111. They say:
"Nobody shall enter Paradise,
except the Jews and the Christians,"
But this is only their wish!
Say:
"Produce your proofs if you're telling the truth!"
112. But no! Only those who surrendered to God
and did good works shall get their reward from their Lord.
And they shall neither fear nor grieve.
113. The Jews say:
"The Christians have no foundation!"
The Christians say:
"The Jews have no foundation!"
They both read the Scripture,
yet they talk like those who have no knowledge.
God will judge their differences On Resurrection Day.

114*Who is more unjust than the one
who forbids mentioning the Name of God in God's mosques
and strives to destroy them?

Yet, they ought to enter them only in fear!
They have nothing to expect, but humiliation in this life
and a great punishment in the Hereafter.

115*To God belongs the East and the West.
Whichever direction you turn to, the face of God is there!
Verily, God is limitless and all-knowing.

116. [The Christians] say:
"God has taken a son for Himself."
Glory to Him! He owns everything in Heavens and earth,
and everything worships Him!
117. He is the Creator of Heavens and earth.
When He decides upon a matter, He says to it:
— Be! And there it is!

118. Those who lack Knowledge say:
"Why doesn't God speak to us or send us a Sign?"
Their predecessors used to say the same thing —
their hearts are so alike!
Yet, We have explained the Signs to people with conviction!

119. Verily, We have sent you with the Truth
as a Bearer of good news and a Warner;
you are not responsible for the inmates of the blazing Fire!
120. Neither the Jews nor the Christians will be pleased with you
until you convert to their creed.
Say:
"Verily, God's Guidance is the [true] Guidance!"
If you followed their desires
after you had received Knowledge,
you would not find in God a protector or a helper.
121. But those who have received Our Scripture
read it as it should be read, and believe in it.
And those who deny it shall suffer a loss.

122. O Children of Israel! Remember My mercy to you
when I favored you over [the nations of] the Worlds.
123. Beware of the Day
when no soul shall intercede for another soul,
when ransom shall not be accepted from her,
when no intercession shall assist her,
when nobody shall be helped.

124*When his Lord tested Abraham by His Commands,
and he fulfilled them, [God] said:
— I am going to make you an Imam of men.
[Abraham] said:
"And my posterity too?"
[God] said:
— My Covenant does not cover the sinners.

125*When We made of [Our] House a meeting place for the people,

and assured its security,
the station of Abraham became a place of prayer.
We concluded a Covenant with Abraham and Ishmael
to let them sanctify My House for those
who walk [around it] and use it as a shelter,
who bow and prostrate themselves.
126. When Abraham said:
"O my Lord! Make it a City of Peace
and provide with fruit those of its dwellers
who believe in God and in the Last Day,"
[God] said:
— I will give a little enjoyment to those who disbelieve,
and then I will drive them for punishment into the Fire.
What a bad destination it will be!

127. When Abraham, [together] with Ishmael,
raised the foundations of the House, [he prayed]:
"O our Lord!
Accept [this] from us!
Verily, You are the Hearer, the All-Knowing.
128. O our Lord!
Make Muslims of us
and a Muslim community of our posterity.
Show us the places [of prayer] and turn to us.
Verily, You're the Indulgent, the Merciful!
129. O our Lord!
Send them a Messenger from their midst
to let him recite Your Verses to them,
teach them the Scripture and Wisdom, and purify them.
Verily, You are the Mighty, the Wise!"

130. Whoever rejects the creed of Abraham impoverishes his soul.
We have chosen him in this world
and, verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the upright.

131. When his Lord said to him:
— Be a Muslim!,
he said:
"I'm submitting myself to the Lord of the Worlds!"
132. Abraham enjoined upon his sons and Jacob:
"O my sons! God has chosen [this] religion for you;
then, die only as Muslims!"

133* You have not been there when death approached Jacob,
and he said to his sons:
"What will you worship after I'm gone?"
They said:
"We'll worship your God: the God of your fathers,
[the God] of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac —
the One God to Whom we're submitting ourselves."
134. That nation belongs to the past.
It shall reap what it had sowed,
and you [shall reap] what you have sowed —

you shall not be asked about their deeds.

135. They say:
"Be Jewish or Christian, then you'll find the right way!"
Say:
"No, the faith of Abraham, the Hanif, is better —
indeed, he was not an Associator!"
136*Let you all say:
"We believe in God and in what has been sent down to us,
and in what had been sent down to Abraham,
Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes [of Israel],
and in what had been given by their Lord
to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets.
We make no distinction between them,
and to Him we submit ourselves!"

137. If they believe, as you believe,
they are on the right path;
but if they turn back, they are in schism
and God is sufficient for you against them.
He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

138*The baptism of God!
What is better than the baptism of God?
Indeed it is Him that we worship!
139. Say:
"Why should we argue about God
if He's our Lord and your Lord,
if we have our works, and you have your works,
and if we're all sincerely devoted to Him?"

140*How can you contend that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob,
and the tribes [of Israel] were Jewish or Christian?
Say:
"Do you know it better than God?
Who is more unjust than the one
who conceals the testimony of God?
God does not overlook what you do!"
141. That people belong to the past.
They will receive what they had earned,
and you will receive what you have earned.
You shall not be asked about their deeds.
142*The foolish among the people will say:
"What has made [the Muslims] abandon the **qibla**
they used to hold on to?
Say:
"To God belongs the East and the West;
He guides to the straight path anyone He wills."
143*We have made of you a well balanced community
to let you be witnesses for the people,
and to let the Messenger be your witness.
We had appointed the qibla to which you held [before]
only to distinguish those who follow the Messenger

from those who turned their backs.
Indeed, that was difficult,
except for those whom God guided aright.
God would never let your faith be devalued.
Verily, God is all-forgiving and merciful to people!

144. We see how you turn your face to the sky.
Now We will turn you to a qibla that shall satisfy you.
Turn your face toward the Sacred Mosque!
Wherever you are, turn your face in its direction!
The People of the Scripture surely know
that this is the Truth from their Lord,
and that God does not overlook their deeds.
145. But even if you showed all the Signs
to the People of the Scripture,
they would not turn to your qibla,
just as you would not turn to their qibla.
Indeed, nobody would turn to each other's quibble!
But if after receiving Knowledge,
you still followed their desires,
then you would surely be among the sinners.

146. The People of the Scripture know that
as well as they know their sons,
but some of them knowingly conceal the Truth.
147. Truth proceeds from your Lord,
so do not be among those who have doubts!

148. Everyone has a direction he turns to.
Compete [with one another] in good deeds!
Wherever you are, God will bring you together.
Verily, God has power over everything!
149. Wherefrom you come forth,
turn your face to the Sacred Mosque —
such is the Truth of your Lord.
God is not heedless of what you do.
150. When you come out of any place,
turn your face to the Sacred Mosque.
Wherever you are, turn your face to it,
then nobody will blame you, except the sinners.
Do not fear them, but fear Me
and I will complete My favor to you.
Perhaps you will accept Guidance!

151* We have sent to you a Messenger from your midst
to recite Our Verses to you, to purify you,
to teach you the Scripture and the Wisdom,
and to enlighten you about what you did not know.
152. Remember Me, and I will remember you.
Be thankful to Me and do not reject your faith!

153. O you who have believed!
Seek help in patience and prayer —

verily, God is with those who endure!
154. Do not say about those who died in the way of God:
"They've died."
— No! They are alive, only you do not perceive [it].
155. We test you by fear and hunger,
by loss of property, souls, and fruits [of your labor].
So give the good news to those who endure,
156. to those who say when misfortune befalls them:
"We belong to God and to Him we shall return."
157. They are those who received the blessings
and the mercy of their Lord.
They are those who received Guidance.

158*[The hills] of Safa and Marwa are Memorials to God.
It is not sinful to walk around them,
when you visit the House or perform the 'umrah.
Indeed, those who strive to do good...
verily, God is generous and knowing!

159. Verily, those who conceal the Proofs and the Guidance
that We have sent down to the people
after We explained them in the Scripture,
will be cursed by God and by those able to curse;
160. but not those who repented, made amends,
and professed [the Truth].
I turn to them as the Relentant, the Merciful!
161. Verily, let the curse of God, the Angels, and the people
be upon those who disbelieved and died in disbelief!

162. It shall be upon them for ever.
Their punishment shall not be reduced,
and they shall not receive a reprieve!

Vv. 3-4: The basic requirements for being a Muslim.

V. 10: The sick in hearts are the wavering Arabs, later called the party of the Hypocrites. They were the last inside opponents the Prophet had to contend with (cf. S.63).

V. 14: The Satans of the Jews might be their rabbis.

V. 23: "Our servant" is the Prophet Muhammad.

V. 24: The stone idols of the pagans will serve as fuel.

V. 25: The tasty fruit that the dwellers of Paradise will eat is an allegory for spiritual gifts. The good in this life and the good in Paradise are linked together by having one source — God.

V. 26: The Koran often uses insects as examples: the gnat (S.101), the ant (S.27), the spider (S.29), the bee (S.16), and the fly (S.22:73). Apparently these analogies had a strong effect on the listeners.

V. 30: It is not clear was the regent Adam or somebody else.

Were there other acts of Creation before that of Adam? Having unlimited creative power, God does not stop creating new worlds and new forms of life. The creation of man just at one point space and time would have limited His power.

A regent is a **khalif**. The first khalif was Adam. The khalifs who succeeded after the Prophet's death were his relatives: Abu-Bakr, the father of his wife 'Aisha, 'Omar, the father of his wife Hafsa, 'Othman, the husband of two of his daughters, and '**Ali ibn Abi Talib**, the husband of his daughter Fatima.

At first, the khalifs were no more than the caretakers of the community. Later on they became absolute leaders. The Khalifate was in constant contention with the shi'ite imams who considered themselves to have been anointed by God.

V. 35: The stories of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve differs from the versions of Genesis. The Koranic Adam and Eve were exiled to earth for disobedience. Before the Fall they ate of the Tree of ***Knowledge*** to become rational beings with God's consent.

V. 36: Here Satan and Iblis are one personage.

V. 37: Adam repented and was pardoned by God after the fall. Therefore, he did not pass to his posterity any "original" sin that needed to be expiated by the Messiah and all mankind.

V. 42: An example of the misinterpretation of the Bible by the Jews is given in v.76.

V. 43: The tax known as "**zakat**" becomes more and more compulsory, even though it is still collected as charity. Collecting the zakat is not easy because it is based on different modes of evaluation, and because a part of property is not submitted to it. Moreover, it is unclear whether the zakat must be raised from the income of the taxpayer or his whole property.

V. 47: The mercy to the Jews consists in sending down to them the Torah and the Evangel and in drawing up the Covenant.

V. 53: "Assurance" or Salvation **furkan**, as in S.25.

V. 54: "Slay the guilty ones," lit., "slay one another."

V. 56: "We raised you after you died," in the original.

V. 58: The town could be the Biblical Shittim (Num.25:1-9), or either Jericho or Jerusalem. The exact meaning of **hittaton** is unknown (this word is perhaps a "shibbolet," the pronunciation of which could reveal the origin of the speaker).

Vv. 58-59 are not unlike S.7:161-162.

V. 61: "Then go back to Egypt" or to a place like Egypt. Some of the Jews regretted having left Egypt and did not appreciate the gift of manna and quails. It is not clear which of the Prophets was slain — probably not Jesus — because according to Muslim tradition Jesus died a natural death.

V. 62: The **Sabi'un** or "Sabeians" were Mesopotamian sects, the vestiges of which still exist in Iraq: one sect, downstream on the Euphrates, recalls the Hanifs, other sects upstream resemble star worshipers.

V. 63: The mountain is probably Mount Sinai.

Vv. 67f: Although S.2 is traditionally called ***The Cow***, this is the story of the sacrifice of a heifer in expiation for murder as described in Num.19:1-9. The parable ridicules those who go after details, while losing sight of the main point.

Vv. 72-73: If a man is found slain and the murderer is not known, a cow is to be sacrificed on the spot of the murder in order to lift the sin from the community (Deut.21:1-9).

V. 76: In their attempts at refuting the Koran, the Jews used their own Scripture.

V. 78: Among the Jews there were ignorant, uneducated people, "**ummi** people" in the original.

V. 79: The Jews were accused of forging the Scriptures.

V. 84: "Treaty" or "Covenant." The text of the verse may refer to the Muslim-Jewish peace agreement at Medina, but it might have a universal application as well.

V. 88: "Our hearts are covered," lit., "our hearts are under wraps," or "our hearts are uncircumcised." Incidentally, Islam follows the Jews in circumcising male children, but they do it around the age of seven. They see in this rite both purification and sacrifice of a part of the body to God.

V. 89: The "Scripture of God" is the Koran. Apparently, there were times when the Jews joined the Muslims against Idolaters and Christians.

V. 91: "All the rest," i.e., the Koran.

V. 93: "They absorbed the calf into their hearts": in the Bible, Moses made the Hebrews drink its ashes mixed with water (Ex. 32: 20). In the Koran this episode is treated allegorically.

V. 94: An affirmation of the universality of Islam.

Vv. 97-98: Earlier, Gabriel was called "Spirit" (S.19:17). The claim that Gabriel played a role in descending the Koran could have distressed the Jews. But the Muslims know that his role of God's intermediary is rooted in the Bible. Comp.: "... I Daniel, had seen the vision..., there behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice..., which ... said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (Dan.8: 15-16).

V. 100: The "treaty" may be the Sinai Covenant or a treaty with the Muslims.

V. 101: It is not clear whether the Jews neglected their own Scripture or the Koran.

V. 102: **Harut** and **Marut** are fallen Angels or Babylonian scholars who dabbled in magic. "Those who acquired it" — using sorcery.

V. 104: The first foreign word is Hebrew and the second is Arabic.

V. 106: A passage among several in the Koran that legitimizes later changes and additions in its text (cf. S.87:6-7).

V. 109: God's command, apparently, about fighting the Jews. The Arabic words **safaha** (turn away), **'afa** (forget) and **ghafara**

(forgive) express different degrees of completeness in forgiving.

V. 110: "The good you send forth..." are the deeds submitted to God for judgment.

V. 114: The places of worship in Mecca and its vicinity were then controlled by the Prophet's opponents.

V. 115: This verse seems to negate the importance of facing a certain direction while praying.

V. 124: The request concerning the immolation of his son.

V. 125: "The House" is the Mosque of Mecca with the **Ka'ba**, that was reputedly build by Abraham and Ishmael (S.106:3). The Ka'ba is a nearly cubic building of gray stone about 40' high, with blind walls. It recalls the New Jerusalem of the Revelation that is cubic in shape (Rev. 21:16). A black meteoric stone is set in a silver rim in one of the corners of the Ka'ba, symbolic, perhaps, of the gems set in the walls of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21).

The Ka'ba is covered with a black cloth (**kiswa**) carrying excerpts from the Koran. At the end of the ten days of pilgrimage, the kiswa is cut to pieces and distributed to pilgrims who take them to their country. The arrival of the kiswa on the back of a camel [the **mahmal**] in Cairo is the occasion of a festivity.

The Ka'ba was a place of devotion for the inhabitants of Mecca (Bacca) for centuries before Islam. In the "times of Ignorance" the Arab tribes were ever at war with one another, but

they were united in their love of poetry, both epic and romantic. The best poems were hung in or on the Ka'ba. They were known as **mu'allaqat** (the hung ones).

The station of Abraham is a couple of meters from the black stone corner of the Ka'ba.

Stones and rocks usually symbolize stability and strength. V. 133: The verse is addressed to the Jews. Notice that the first-born, Ishmael, had precedence over Isaac.

V. 136: "The Tribes [of Israel]" or the patriarchs.

The Prophets were equal among equals, though their achievements were different.

V. 138: True baptism is the willful surrender to God's Will or the mystical rebirth of a person upon becoming a Muslim.

V. 140: Abraham and his successors could not have been called Jewish before Moses received the Torah or Christian before the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Testament.

Vv. 142f: At the beginning Muslims prayed facing Jerusalem, their first **qibla** (S.10:87). It is the site of the Muslim shrine, the "Dome of the Rock" built in the VII century on the site of the "Holy of Holies" of the Jewish Temple. By tradition, Muhammad began his travel to Heaven from this spot (the "Remote Mosque," S.17:1). The Golden Dome is a masterpiece of art and a symbol of the unity of the three semitic religions. For the Jews, it stands on such holy ground that the most devout of them feel unworthy of treading there. It is decorated inside out with Koranic verses about Jesus. The "Remote Mosque" stands beside it.

In mosques, the direction of Mecca is indicated by a wooden or marble niche, the **mihrab**. It symbolizes a cave in the mountain and represents the hidden and the spiritual. It is the heart of the mosque, and the mosque represents the whole world. Beside it stands the **minbar** — a movable raised platform from which the imam reads the lesson of the day. It may have any number of steps, but the preacher usually stands on its second step in deference to the Prophet who liked to stand on the third one.

V. 143: "We have made you a well balanced community" or "We placed your community in the middle" to let you be "witnesses" or "intercessors." In an ideal community the strict observance of the law is mitigated by tolerance towards those who break it.

V. 151: "To purify" or "to remind about paying the zakat."

V. 158: **Safa** and **Mar'wa** are two hills near Mecca. The **'umra** is a visit to Mecca other than a regular pilgrimage.

The three major sins are: disbelief in God, association of idols to God, and ingratitude to God. Gratitude is such a virtue, that God Himself can be appreciative for it.

SURA 46 THE SAND DUNES.

S. 46 exposes polytheists in general and affirms that the Koran does not abrogate any tenets of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, but only confirms and validates them. Like S.31, which follows it, S.46 invites to respect one's parents (vv. 15-18) and recounts the story of 'Ad's Prophet, Hood, who reprimanded his people for their idolatry (vv. 21-28). The sandy hills (Al-Ahqaf) were probably a region of southern Arabia.

46. THE SAND DUNES

Meccan, 35 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2. This is a revelation of the Scripture from God,
the Sublime, the Wise.

3. We have created the Heavens and earth
and what is in between
only by the Truth and for a fixed time.
However, the disbelievers turn away
from what they have been warned about.
4* Say:
"Don't you see what you call on besides God?
Show me what they have created on earth,
or what is their share in the Heavens!
Show me a Scripture revealed before this one,
or at least a trace of [your] Knowledge
if you're telling the truth!"

5. Who is further astray than the one who, besides God,
calls to those who will not answer him on Resurrection Day
and will be heedless to his prayer?
6. And when all the people are rounded up,
they will be hostile to them and reject their worship.
7. When Our clear Verses are recited to the disbelievers,
they say of the Truth that came to them:
"This is obvious magic!"
8. And [of Muhammad] they say:
"He forged [the Koran]!"
Say:
"If I forged it, you wouldn't save me from God!
He's well aware of your insinuations,
and sufficient He is as a witness between us!
He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

9. Say:
"I'm not an innovator among the Messengers
and I don't know what will happen to you or me.
I'm just following what I'm inspired with;
I'm just a lucid Warner!"
10* Say:
"If you think that [the Koran] is from God,
how can you reject it?
Indeed, a witness from among the Children of Israel
came forward and confirmed its similarity [to the Torah].
He believed, while you're still boasting around.
Verily, God doesn't guide a people of transgressors!"

11* The disbelievers say to those who believed:
"If [your Revelation] were such a good thing,
then nobody would've beaten us to it!"
But they don't follow it and say:
"It's an old fabrication!"

12* In the past the Scripture of Moses
was a Guidance and a mercy.
This Scripture confirms it in the Arabic language.
It warns the wrong-doers
and brings good tidings to those who do right.

13. Verily, those who say:
"Our Lord is God!"
and stand firmly [on it] shall neither fear nor grieve.
14. They own Paradise where they shall dwell for ever
in recompense for their good deeds.

15* We have enjoined on man to be kind to his parents.
His mother carries him in pain and gives birth in pain.
She carries and nurses him thirty months till weaning.
And when he is forty and reaches maturity, he says:
"O my Lord!
Make me grateful for the favor
You've bestowed upon me and my parents.
[Inspire] me to do good and to satisfy You.
Extend [Your] favor to me and to my offspring.
Truly I'm turning to You,
and truly [to You] I'm submitting myself!"

16. Such are those whose their best deeds We accept,
and to whom We forgive their sins.
We truly promise them
to be among the dwellers of Paradise.

17* [There is the one who] says to his parents:
"Fie upon you! You're threatening me with resurrection,
but what about the generations that preceded me?"
Seeking God's help, they say:
"Woe to you! God's promise is surely true!",
but he says:
"These are some tales of the old!"

18* Such are those of the past generations of Jinn and men
who have already been judged and became losers.

19. Everyone has a degree [of guilt] for his deeds,
for which he shall get a retribution —
nobody shall be treated unjustly!
20. On the Day when the disbelievers face the Fire,
[they shall hear]:
— Did you receive the amenities of this life?
Did you enjoy them?
Your reward today is a humiliating punishment
for your unjustified conceit on earth and your corruption.

21* Remember the brother of the [people] of 'Ad,
who has been warning his people in the sand dunes.
Messengers had come before and after him, and each [said]:

"Don't worship anyone, except God,
I truly fear for you the punishment of the Great Day."
22. [The people] said:
"Did you come to separate us from our gods?
Then bring your threats upon us
if you're telling the truth!"
23. He said:
"Knowledge is with God; I'm only relaying to you
what I've been sent with,
but I see that you're ignorant people!"
24. Observing a cloud approaching their valleys, they said:
"Here is a cloud that brings us rain!"
— No! This is what you have been asking to hasten!
It is a gust that carries a painful punishment
25. and shall destroy everything by the command of its Lord!
And so it was.
In the morning one could see only ruins
at the site of their dwellings —
this is how We reward the people who transgress!

26* We gave them opportunities you did not have;
We gave them hearing, sight, and a heart.
But hearing, sight, and a heart did not benefit them.
When they denied the Signs of God,
they were overcome by what they had been laughing at!

27. In the past, before destroying
some towns in your vicinity,
We had been showing the Signs,
hoping that they would have turned [to Us].
28. Why have they not been helped by those
whom they had worshiped besides God,
and who, as they hoped, would accede them [to Him]?
[The idols] deserted them because they were fake,
just like all their fabrications.

29* We have sent to you a band of Jinn
to listen to the Koran.
When they came, they said:
"Let's listen!"
They returned to their people with a Warning
30. and said:
"O our people! We've listened to a Scripture
which has been sent down after Moses.
It confirms what had been sent down before
and guides to the Truth and to the straight path.
31. O our people!
Respond to the call of the man who calls to God,
and believe him: then [God] will forgive your sins
and save you from a painful punishment.
32. Anyone who doesn't respond to the call of the man
who summons to God, won't weaken God on earth.
He has no protector besides Him —
he is plainly in error!"

33* Do they not see that God,
Who has created the Heavens and earth,
is not tired of creating and can revive the dead?
Yes! He has power over all things!

34. The Day when the disbelievers face the Fire,
[they shall hear]:
— Is this not the Truth?
They shall say:
"Yes, by our Lord, it is!"
— Then taste the punishment for what you have denied!

35* — [O Muhammed!] Be as patient
as the most resolute of the Messengers,
and do not hasten their [punishment]!
The Day they see what has been promised to them,
they will think they had waited
only for one hour of a day.
Proclamation!
Will anyone perish, except the corrupt?

V. 4: "Bring me a Scripture revealed before this one" i.e., bring me any old Scripture that contradicts the Koran.

V. 10: The witness from among the Children of Israel might be Moses on the strength of the prediction made to him that another Prophet like him will be sent to the people (Deut. 18:18).

V. 11: The wealthy Meccans resented that God had sent His Message through a person of lower social standing than their own.

V. 12: The Book of Moses prescribed to the Hebrews a standard of conduct. Jesus had no intention of changing it, but only to correct the errors that crept into its observance ("Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17). Similarly, the Prophet did not want to change the Laws of Moses, but only to confirm them before his people.

The prescriptive compendium of laws that teaches people how to behave in the righteous way is called the **shari'a**. It is just one aspect of the doctrine of Islam, a legislation supported by tradition that explains the relation of man to other people and to the whole world.

V. 15: It was believed that man reaches spiritual maturity only after he is forty years of age.

V. 17: "What about the generations that preceded me," meaning: they have died and we don't know what happened to them. Were they resurrected and judged, or not?

V. 18: These words prepare the story of vv. 29-32 about the Jinn that was interrupted by the segment on Hood.

V. 21: This brother of [the people] of 'Ad is Hood, the subject of S.11.

V. 26: "Heart" (**fu'ad**) includes reason and knowledge.

Vv. 29-32: Like men, the Jinn must listen to the Prophet's preaching (S.72).

V. 33: The Muslims consider it blasphemous to think that God could be tired after creating the Universe (S.50:38).

V. 35: The conclusion of the sura "Proclamation! Will anyone perish, except the corrupt?" can also be understood as: "[You must] proclaim [the Message]! Will anyone perish, except the corrupt?"

SURA 31 LUQMAN. ***The title of S.31 is the name of the mythical Luqman, an ancient Arab sage, compared sometimes to Solomon and Aesop, famous for giving people judicious advice.***

31. L U Q M A N
Meccan, 34 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim.
2. Here are some Verses from the wise Scripture.
3. It is a Guidance and a mercy for those who do good,
4. observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and firmly believe in the Hereafter.
5. They follow their Lord's Guidance —
they are the ones who will prosper.

6* Some people who are deprived of knowledge
collect frivolous tales
to drive [others] away from God's path
that they subject to ridicule.
A shameful punishment is [in store] for them!
7. When Our verses are recited to such [a man],
he turns away in disdain as if he were deaf in both ears.
So announce to him a painful punishment!
8. But for those who believe and do right
there will be the Gardens of Bliss
9. in which they shall abide for ever.
God's promise is true —
He is the Sublime, the Wise.

10* He has created the Heavens
without visible supports.
He buttressed the earth with mountains
to prevent it from shaking under you;
then He spread on it a great many of creatures.
We send water down from the sky
and We produce on earth noble pairs of all kinds.
11. Such is God's creation!
Show Me what has been created
by others besides Him!
Yes, deep is the error of the wrong-doers!

12. We have bestowed Wisdom upon Luqman:
— Be grateful to God! A grateful man is grateful
for his own good, but an ungrateful man…
verily, God is rich and praiseworthy!

13. Once Luqman admonished his son, saying:
"O my dearest son! Don't associate with God!
Verily, association is a great sin!"

14. We enjoined on man [respect for] his parents.
His mother carries him in weakness after weakness
and weans him after two years.
So, be grateful to Me and to your parents,
for you will return to Me!
15. But do not yield to them if they insist
that you associate with Me something
you do not know anything about.
Keep them company in this life in good faith,
but follow the way of those who have turned to Me.
In the end, when you all return to Me,
I will inform you of your deeds.

16* [Luqman said]:
"O my dearest son! God will retrieve anything
even if it weighs as little as a grain of mustard,
and be it [hidden] under a rock in Heavens or on earth.
Verily, God is gracious, well-informed!
17. "O my dearest son! Observe the prayer,
urge to the reputable, resist evil,
and patiently endure what befalls you —
verily, this shall impart firmness to [your] affairs.
18. Don't puff up your cheeks before the people
and don't walk boisterously upon the earth.
Verily, God doesn't love conceited braggarts!
19. Be moderate in your pace and lower your voice.
Verily, the most repulsive sound is the braying of an ass!"

20. Do you not see that God has given you
everything in Heavens and earth
and that He has showered you
with His mercy, seen and unseen?

Yet, there are people who argue about God
without Knowledge, Guidance,
or an enlightening Scripture!
21. When told:
"Follow what God has sent down to you," they say:
"No! We'll follow in our fathers' footsteps!"
— Even if Satan calls them to the punishment by the Fire?

22. Whoever totally submits himself to God and does good deeds
is holding fast onto the surest support —
indeed, in God is the outcome of all affairs!
23. If someone denies faith,
do not take his rejection to heart!
Indeed, they shall all return to Us,
and We will tell them the truth about their deeds.

Verily, God knows well what is in the hearts!
24. We will let them enjoy [life] for a while,
then We will drive them to a severe punishment.
25. Ask them, Who has created the Heavens and earth.
They will surely say:
"It's God!"
Say:
"Praise be to God!"
But most of them do not understand.

26. To God belongs everything in Heavens and earth.
Verily, God is the Rich, the Praiseworthy.
27* If all the trees on earth were used to make writing reeds,
and if the sea were ink, and seven seas were added to it,
even then it will not suffice
[to write] all of God's Words.
Verily, God is mighty and wise!

28* You will be resurrected as one soul,
as you have been created.
Verily, God is hearing and all-seeing!

29. Do you not see how God
merges the night with the day
and merges the day with the night;
and how He has subjected the sun and the moon
to run their course in a fixed time?
Verily, God is well aware of all what you do!
30* This is because God is the Truth,
and what they call upon besides Him are lies.
Verily, He is the Exalted, the Great.

31. Do you not see how by the grace of God
the ships sail upon the sea
to let Him show you some of His Signs?
Verily, these Signs are for the patient and grateful.

32. When a wave covers them like a cloud,
they call to God with sincere faith,
but as soon as He brings them to land,
some of them begin to doubt.
Indeed, only the deceitful and ungrateful deny Our Signs!

33. O people!
Be devout to your Lord and dread the Day
when a father will fail his son,
and a son will fail his father.
Verily, God's promise is true.
So do not let this life deceive you,
and do not let the Deceiver deceive you about God!

34. Verily, God knows about the Hour.
He is the One, Who sends down the rain

and knows what is in the wombs.
But nobody knows what he will get tomorrow
or in what land death will claim him.
Verily, God is all-knowing and well-informed!

V. 6: The Meccans who were hostile to the Prophet used to compare the Koran to tales, conceivably, of Persian origin.

V. 10: Pronouns referring to God often change without apparent reason. "He," "We," and "I" standing for God differ in formality and expression: "He" is found in descriptions of God, "We" — in His commands, and "I" — in His addresses to a person (S. 25:45).

V. 16: God is "the source of beauty," or kind (**latif**).

V. 27: An admonition to those who believe that their Scripture and not the Koran is the ultimate Revelation.

V. 28: God is aware of His Creation as a whole.

V. 30: God ***is*** the Truth. God and Truth are one concept. Even the least educated man wants to perceive his own nature and his place in the universe, and he looks for the Truth through an understanding of God. This religious and humanistic quest continues in the era of computers and wholesale information. But Truth crumbles and vanishes when man, ***without believing in it***, seeks it everywhere: in creeds, in philosophical systems, in mysticism, in astrology, in humanism, in science, in atheism. Vain are the attempts at understanding all the facts with the help of reason alone. The path to Truth based on Knowledge and Wisdom lies through the intellect guided by high spirituality and culture.

The translation of the Koran must strive to emulate the original in building and developing the concept of God as the absolute Truth. If it doesn't do it, it's worthless. A translator is above all a transmitter of thought and not a transmitter of words. He is humble because he knows that his translation can only impoverish the original, yet an accessible translation is necessary to facilitate the understanding of Islam, the religion of a billion people.

SURA 6 (I) CATTLE. ***In order to understand the gist of the Koranic Revelation, one must internalize the relationship between God, Truth, Knowledge, and Wisdom. Guidance, Warnings, Reminders, the Prophetic stories, and all the "Say" passages have one goal: to make man one, whole, poised, and worthy of His Creator. Therefore, for Muslims the Koran is the path to the Truth, it is God's Light, it is Truth itself.***

S. 6 gets its name from its dietary prescriptions concerning meat. Like SS. 2 and 3, this sura can be divided into two parts. The first part contains 1) Warnings to the disbelievers in vv. 1-10; 2) a long string of Say and Warning passages in vv. 11-73; 3) the reasoning that led Abraham to reject polytheism in vv. 74-83; 4) a list of Prophet Muhammad's predecessors in vv. 84-90; 5) an accusation of those who hide parts of the Revelation or fake divine inspiration in vv. 91- 94; 6) Sign passages with a doxology in vv. 95-117. The remainder of S.6 (vv.118-165) is in Part VI of this work that deals with of Legislation.

6. CATTLE
Meccan, 165 verses

PART I. (VV. 1-117)

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Praised be God,
Who created the Heavens and the earth
and made darkness and light!
Yet, the disbelievers make [others] equal to their Lord!

2. He is the One, Who created you from clay
and fixed [your] term and a time for [meeting] with Him.
Yet, you are still in doubt!

3. He is God in Heavens and earth.
He knows what you conceal and what you reveal;
He knows what you deserve.

4. Not a single Sign of the Signs of God had reached them
that they have not rejected.
5. And when they faced the Truth, they disbelieved in it!
But soon they shall receive some news
about the object of their derision.
6. Do they not see how many generations
We have destroyed before them?
We had given them opportunities on earth
that We have not given you.
We had been sending upon them abundant rain
and We made rivers flow at their feet.
But We destroyed them for their sins
and created other generations after them.

7. — [O Muhammad!] Had we sent down to you a Scripture
on parchment that they could touch with their hands,
still the disbelievers would have said:
"This is obvious magic!"
8* They say:
"Why hasn't an Angel been sent down to him?"
But had We sent down an Angel,
their case would have already been decided,
and they would not have received a reprieve.
9. And had We made him as an Angel resembling a human being,
it would have compounded their confusion.
10. Messengers were laughed at before you,
but what they were laughing at has turned against them.
11. Say:
"Travel about in the land
and see the fate of those who rejected [the Truth]."
12. Say:

"To whom does everything belong in Heaven and earth?"
Say:
"To God! He has ordained mercy upon Himself;
surely He'll gather you all together on Resurrection Day!"
And those who lost their souls will remain unbelievers.
13. To Him belongs everything dwelling in the night and the day.
He is the Hearing, the All-Knowing.
14. Say:
"How can I take another protector besides God,
the Creator of the Heavens and the earth,
Who feeds the others, but Who is fed by no one."
Say:
"Yes! I'm ordered to be the first to surrender to God.
So don't be among the Associators!"
15. Say:
"If I disobeyed my Lord,
I'd fear the punishment of the Great Day."
16. And if anyone avoids it on that Day,
it will be only by His mercy: it shall be a great success!
17. If God touches you with distress,
only He can remove it from you;
if He touches you with goodness,
then He has power over everything!
18. His power extends to His servants —
He is the Wise, the All-Knowing.
19. Say:
"Whose testimony carries the most weight?"
Say:
"God is witness between us.
This Koran has been inspired to me
to make me warn you and anyone it reaches.
How can you affirm that there are other gods besides God?"
Say:
"No! I can't affirm that!"
Say:
"In truth He is One God,
and I'm not involved in what you associate."

20. Those to whom We have given the Scripture
know it as well as they know their sons;
but those who lost their souls do not believe.

21. Who does more harm than the one
who invents lies against God or rejects His Signs?
The wrong-doers shall not be successful!
22. The Day when We gather them all together,
We will say to the Associators:
— Where are the partners you have fabricated?
23. Their only recourse will be to deceive by saying:
"By God our Lord, we haven't been Associators!"
24. You see how they lie against themselves!
And those they have invented have abandoned them.
25* Some of them [pretend to] listen to you,

but We have cast veils upon their hearts
and sealed their ears
to prevent them from understanding [the Koran].
Even if they see all the Signs,
they will not believe in them
and will come to you just to argue.
Those who disbelieve say:
"These are only some old tales!"
26. They turn away from [the Koran] and turn others away.
They ruin their souls without even noticing [it].
27. If you could see them lined up before the Fire!
They will say:
"If we're sent back, we won't reject the Signs
of our Lord and we'll join the believers!"
28. Yes, what they have been hiding will appear before them.
If they were brought back, they would surely return
to what was forbidden to them — indeed, they are such liars!

29. They say:
"There is nothing, except our life on earth,
and we shall not be raised."
30. If you could see them lined up before their Lord!
He will say:
— Is this not real?
They will say:
"Yes! By our Lord!"
He will say:
— Then taste the punishment for your disbelief!

31. When the Hour suddenly dawns upon them,
those who denied their meeting with God shall be the losers.
They will say:
"Woe to us for not having thought of that!"
There is a burden on their back, and evil is this burden!

32. The present life is only play and amusement,
but the abode in the Hereafter is better for the righteous.
Do you not understand?

33. — [O Muhammad!] Yes, We know how their words sadden you.
But it is not you that they reject —
they reject the Signs of God.
34. Messengers have been rejected before you;
they suffered from lies and persecutions
until We came to their rescue.
Indeed, nobody can change God's Words!
You have surely heard some reports about the Messengers.
35. You are so distressed that they were scorned,
that you would like to find a crevice in the ground
or a ladder to the sky to bring them a Sign.
But had God so willed,
He would have gathered them all on [His] path!
Then, do not be [one] of the ignorant!

36. God responds to those who listen [to Him].
And He will raise the dead — to Him is their return!
37. They say:
"Why doesn't his Lord send him a Sign?"
Say:
"Verily, God has the power to send down a Sign!"
But most of them do not understand!

38. There are no beasts on earth nor birds on the wing
that [do not form] communities like yours.
We have not omitted anything in the Scripture —
they shall all be gathered to their Lord!

39. Those who reject Our Signs are deaf and dumb,
they [wander] in darkness.
God sends astray anyone He wills
and sets on the straight path anyone He wills.
40. Say:
"Think, would you call to any one besides God
at the approach of God's retribution or the Hour?
But be truthful!
41. Yes, you'll call to Him! And if He wills,
He will free you from what you ask Him [to remove],
and you'll forget what you have been associating!"

42. And before you We have sent [Warners] to the nations
that We afflicted with suffering and distress,
hoping that they would humble themselves.
43. Why have they not humbled themselves
when Our afflictions reached them? —
Because their hearts have been hardened,
and Satan had embellished their deeds.
44. Although they forgot the Reminder,
We gave them access to everything,
and they began rejoicing at their gifts.
But when We suddenly took hold of them,
they sank in utter despair!
45. Thus the wrong-doers were destroyed, all to the last one.
Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!
46. Say:
"Imagine, if God takes away your hearing and sight
and seals your hearts,
what god besides God will return them to you?"
You see how We explain the Signs —
yet they are still turning away!
47. Say:
"Think that if God's punishment
came upon you either suddenly or with warning,
who would be destroyed other than the sinful people?"
48. We are sending Messengers to bring good news and to warn.
The one who believed and mended his ways
should neither fear, nor grieve.
49. But those who rejected Our Signs

shall be punished for their iniquity.
50. Say:
"I'm not telling you
that I possess the treasuries of God
and that I know the Unseen.
I don't pretend to be an Angel —
I'm only following what has been inspired to me."
Say:
"Can the blind be compared to the keen-sighted?
Perhaps you'll reflect!"

51. — [O Muhammad!] Warn [by the Koran] those who fear
that if they were brought before their Lord
they would have no protector nor intercessor besides Him —
then, perhaps they will be true to God!
52. Do not drive away those who call to their Lord
mornings and evenings and strive to His Countenance.
You are not responsible for them in the least,
and they are not responsible for you in the least.
Do not drive them away, lest you be a wrong-doer.

53. We test them one by the other to let them say:
"Are they those of you
to whom God has given His favors?"
Does not God know best those of you who are grateful?
54. When those who believe in Our Signs come to you,
say: "Peace upon you!"
Your Lord has taken upon Himself to be merciful to you,
and if anyone of you committed evil out of ignorance,
and later repented and amended his ways...
[God] is forgiving and compassionate!

55. This is how We explain the Signs
and expose the ways of the sinners.
56. Say:
"I've been forbidden to worship
those you call apart from God."
Say:
"I won't follow your passions, lest I go astray
and won't be with those who follow the Guidance."
57* Say:
"I stand upon the Proofs of my Lord that you deny.
I have no power over what you would like to hasten.
Indeed, decision belongs only to God —
He proclaims the Truth
and He's the best of those who decide!"
58. Say:
"If what you'd like to hasten depended on me,
then the matter between us would've already been settled.
But God knows best those who are doing wrong!"

59. He holds the keys to the Unseen, He alone knows about it.
He knows what is on the land and at sea,

and not a leaf can fall without His knowledge.
There is no seed in the darkness of the soil,
and there is nothing that sprouts or withers
that is not in the clear Record.

60. He is the One, Who withdraws your souls at night
and knows what you have done during the day.
Then He returns you to life
until the appointed term is reached.
At the end you shall return to Him,
and He will tell you how well you have done.

61* Exalted He is above His servants!
He sends Guardians to you, and when one of you dies,
Our Envoys carry him away — they never miss anything!
62. Then they are returned to God, their true Protector —
indeed, the judgment is His,
and He is the quickest at accounting!
63. Say:
"Who else can deliver you from danger on land or on sea?
You call to Him with humility and fear:
'If You save us from this [danger],
then we'll be thankful!'"
64. Say:
"If God saves you from this and other dangers,
then, why do you become Associators?"
65. Say:
"He has the power to send you the punishment
from above or from under your feet,
or to confuse you by [dividing you] into factions
in order to give you a taste of infighting."
See how We explain the Signs —
perhaps they will understand!
66. But your people reject [the Koran], albeit it is the Truth.
Say:
"I'm not your trustee!
67. Each message has its time, and soon you shall know!"

68. When you meet those who prattle about Our Signs,
turn away from them until they change the subject.
And if Satan makes you forget,
do not sit beside the transgressors
after you recover your senses.
69* The righteous are not responsible for their account,
but if they keep reminding them,
perhaps they will become God-fearing!
70. Avoid those who take their religion for play or fun
and are seduced by the life of this world.
Remind them that a soul destroys herself by her deeds,
that she has no protector nor intercessor besides God,
and that no ransom shall be accepted from her.
This is what will happen to those
who destroyed themselves by what they have earned.

For them there is a boiling drink
and a painful punishment for their disbelief.
71. Say:
"Shall we call on something besides God
that can neither benefit nor harm us?
If we turn back after receiving God's Guidance,
we'll be like the one who has been seduced by the Satans,
and is now wandering in the land, while his companions
are calling him to the straight path: 'Come to us!'"
Say:
"God's Guidance is [the true] Guidance.
We've been ordered to submit ourselves
to the Lord of the Worlds,
72. to observe the prayer, and to fear God —
indeed, you shall all be gathered to Him!"

73. He is the One, Who has created Heavens and earth in Truth.
The day He says:
— Be! It will be. Indeed, His Word is the Truth.
He is the Sovereign of the Day
when the trumpet will be blown.
He knows the hidden and the revealed —
He is the Wise, the Well-informed.

74* Abraham said to his father Azar:
"How can you mistake your idols for gods?
I see that you and your people are in manifest error!"
75. To sustain Abraham, We showed him Our power
over the Kingdom of Heavens and earth.
76. When the night covered him, he saw a star and said:
"This is my Lord!"
But when it set, he said:
"I don't like anything that sets!"
77. When he saw the rising moon, he said:
"This is my Lord!"
But when it set, he said:
"If my Lord doesn't guide me,
I'll be among the people who lost their way!"
78. When he saw the rising sun, he said:
"This is my Lord, the greatest of them all!"
But when it set, he said:
"O my people! I'm innocent of what you associate!
79. As a Hanif, I'm turning my face towards the One,
Who created the Heavens and the earth,
and I'm not an Associator!"
80. When the people started arguing with him, he said:
"Do you want to argue with me about God,
the One, Who has guided me?
I won't fear those you associate with Him,
unless my Lord wills it,
for my Lord's Knowledge encompasses all things.
Wouldn't you come to your senses?
81. Why would I fear whatever you associate with God

if you aren't afraid of associating
something He hasn't allowed?
Do you know which of the two parties is more secure? —
82. More secure is the one which believes,
doesn't confuse its belief with evil,
and stays on the right path."

83. Such are Our Proofs that We gave to Abraham
to use them in convincing his people.
We raise in ranks anyone We will.
Verily, your Lord is wise and all-knowing!

84. We gave him Isaac and Jacob
who were both under Our Guidance.
Before them We had guided Noah,
and then his posterity: David, Solomon,
Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron.
This is how We reward those who do good!
85. And Zechariah, John, Jesus, and Elias —
they were all among the righteous;
86. and Ismail, Elisha, Jonas, and Lot,
We favored all of them above the nations of the Worlds.
87. We chose them from among their fathers, their posterity,
and their brothers, and We guided them to the straight path.

88. This is God's Guidance by which He guides
any of His servants, as He pleases.
But had they been Associators,
all their deeds would have been in vain.
89. We gave them the Scripture, Wisdom, and Prophecy,
but if they reject them,
We shall entrust them to a people who will not deny them.
90. Follow the guidance of those who received God's Guidance!
Say:
"I'm not asking you to be paid for that.
This's just a Reminder to the Worlds!"

91* They do not value God at His true value when they say:
"God hasn't sent down anything to man!"
Say:
"And Who has sent down the Scripture
that was brought by Moses?
It's a Light and a Guidance for people,
but you tear it to sheets for display,
and much of it you conceal.
Yet, you've learned with its help
what you and your fathers hadn't known before."
Say:
"It's God [Who has sent it down]!"
Then let them have fun in vain palabers!

92* This is a blessed Scripture
that We have sent down to confirm what they already had.

Use it to warn the Mother of Towns and its vicinity.
Those who believe in the Hereafter
believe in [the Scripture] and observe their prayers.
93* Who does a greater evil than the one
who invents lies against God or says:
"I've received an inspiration,"
although he has not received anything like it!
Or:
"I can produce something like what God has sent down!"
If you could see the sinners in the agony of death
when the Angels stretch their hands to them:
"Give up your souls!
Today you'll receive a humiliating punishment
as a reward for lying about God
and scornfully rejecting His Signs!"

94. And now you came to Us as you are,
as We have created you from the beginning,
leaving behind what We have given to you.
Why do We not see beside you the intercessors
whom you considered to be your partners?
Now your ties with them have been broken,
and your fancies have vanished from sight!

95. Verily, God lets the grain and the fruit seed germinate.
He produces the living from the dead
and the dead from the living. He is God!
But how far you are from the Truth!
96. He ushers the daybreak; He assigns the night for rest,
and the sun and the moon for keeping [time] —
such is the ruling of the Sublime, the All-knowing.

97* He is the One, Who gave you the stars to let you find
your way in the dark on the land and the sea!
This is how We explain Our Signs to people who know!
98* He is the One, Who produced you from one soul
and [gave] you a place to reside and a place to rest.
This is how We explain Our Signs to people who understand!
99. He is the One, Who sends water down from the sky.
With it We grow plants of all kinds,
thus producing greenery from which
We bring forth rows of grain and clusters of fruit,
hanging low from the sheaves of palm-trees,
and gardens of grapes, olives, and pomegranates
of similar and different [kinds].
Look at the fruit: how they grow, how they ripen!
Verily, there are Signs in this for people who believe!

100. Yet, they associated some Jinn as partners to God,
the One, Who created them.
In [their] ignorance they falsely
attributed to [God] daughters and sons.
Glory to Him, exalted He is above what they ascribe to Him!

101. How can the Originator of Heavens and earth
have a son without a wife?
He has created everything, He knows everything!
102. He is God, your Lord!
There is no god but Him, the Creator of all things.
So worship Him: does He not control everything?
103*Vision cannot encompass Him,
but He encompasses all vision!
He is the Ineffable, the Well-Informed.
104*[Say]:
"You've received eye-opening Proofs from your Lord.
They benefit the one who sees them,
and they hurt the one who is blind to them.
And I'm not your guardian!"

05. We explain the Signs to let them say:
"You taught us,"
and to let Us explain everything to the people who know.
106. So follow what your Lord has inspired to you.
There is no god but Him! So shun the Associators!
107. Had God so willed, they would not have become Associators.
We have not made you their guardian and caretaker.

108. Do not revile those they call on besides God,
lest they revile God out of spite and ignorance.
We made the actions of every community alluring to them,
but when they are returned to their Lord,
He shall tell them what they have done.

109*They swore by the strongest oath — by God,
that they will believe if [a new] Sign came to them.
Say:
"Verily, all Signs are from God!
But how to convince you that they wouldn't believe
even if all [the Signs] came down to them!"

110*We shall turn their hearts and sight upside down,
so that they would not believe like the first time,
and We shall let them wander blindly in sin.
111. Even if We had sent them down some Angels
or allowed the dead to speak to them,
or brought everything before them,
still they would not believe without God's permission —
indeed, most of them ignore [the Truth].

112. To each Prophet We have appointed enemies —
Satans from among men and Jinn,
who deceive one another by flowery words.
If your Lord had willed it,
they would not have done it.
So leave them alone with their fabrications
113. that fill the hearts of those
who do not believe in the Hereafter.

Let them enjoy them and gain from them
what they would like to gain.
114. [Say]:
"Why would I want another judge besides God?
Indeed, He is the One, Who has sent down to you
the Scripture that explains everything."
Those who have received the Scripture know
that it had been revealed by your Lord in Truth.
So, don't be among those who doubt!

115. The Words of your Lord are true and just;
no one has the power to change His Words.
He is the Hearer, the Knowing.

116. If you obeyed the majority on earth,
they would lead you astray from the path of God.
Indeed, they follow only conjectures and invent lies.

117. Verily, your Lord knows best who has left His path,
and He knows best who goes by [His] Guidance!

V. 2: "Another term" — the Last Day.

V. 8: The Angels come to earth only to collect the souls of the dead (S.98:18).

V. 25: The disbelievers will be separated from God by a curtain (S.83:15). They consider the Koran to be a collection of fables (see note to S.31:6).

V. 57: The sinners want to hasten the Hour of Judgment.

V. 61: "The Guardians" are Angels, symbols of God's solicitude to man. The "Envoys" are the Angels who receive the souls of the dying (cf. v.8).

V. 69: "For their account" — the account of the disbelievers.

V. 74: In the Bible, Abraham's father is called **Terah.** Azar is possibly Assur, a name that recalls the Assyrian origin of the Hebrews.

V. 91: "To sheets" — "to papyri" in the original.

V. 92: The "Mother of Towns" is Mecca.

V. 93: At the time of the Prophet Muhammad there were other preachers in Arabia; the best known was **Musailima** (died in 633).

V. 97: The Koran can be considered as a collection of Signs that prove of God's existence and His Oneness. They are seen everywhere: the sun, the stars, the animals, the natural phenomena. In the spiritual realm, they are the soul, the mind, love, beauty, intelligence, the Koranic Verses themselves. By extension, the Signs are all that surrounds man and all that he experiences.

Quite a few verses are concluded by appeals to use one's mind (cf. vv. 32, 50, 80). The Koran is not just a collection of tales and old fables (S.46:17), but a normative divine Revelation.

V. 98: "A place for dwelling and a place for repose" — other translations are possible.

V. 103: **Latif** — "ineffable" or "kindly" (S. 31:16).

V. 104: These words should have been introduced by "Say."

V. 109: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt. 16:4).

V. 110: “We shall turn their hearts and sight upside down” — “We shall confuse their hearts and sight.” In vv. 25,43,46 the heart is **qalb**, in vv. 110,113, it is **fu'ad** (cf. S.28:10).

To preclude any doubt, the text of the Scripture must be clear, as is said at the beginning of SS.15, 28, 11, 12, 34, 43, and it cannot be doubted (cf. SS. 32,2). In every page one senses the care for the clarity of words and expressions, for the vividness of style, and for the respect of grammar. Solecisms and ugly borrowings from foreign languages that make possible uncalled for jokes and taints are condemned.

SURA 16 THE BEE. ***Judging by the topic and the shortness of some verses, S.16 seems to be Meccan; but a couple of passages, such as the appeal to Meccan Muslims to emigrate to Medina , definitely belong to the later Medinan period. As a whole, this sura is an indictment of the pagan Associators. It ends with some dietary prescriptions (vv. 114-118) and an appeal to patience and moderation.***

16. THE BEE
Meccan, 128 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. God’s Command has arrived, so do not hasten it!
Glory to Him! Exalted He is above what they associate!

2. He sends down the Angels
with the spirit of His Command
to those of His servants He pleases:
— Warn that there is no god besides Me and be God-fearing!

3. He has created the Heavens and the earth in Truth.
Exalted He is above what they associate!
4. He has created man from a drop of semen,
yet man openly resists [Him]!
5. He has created for you the cattle that give you warmth
and benefit you. You use them for food.
6. You admire their beauty
when you drive them in or drive them out.
7. They carry your goods to a land
that you cannot reach without exhausting yourselves.
Verily, your Lord is kind and merciful!
8. He has created horses, mules and asses
for you to ride upon and to show,
and much else that you do not know.
9. The straight path leads to God,
but the other paths lead aside.
Had He so willed, He would have guided
all of you on the straight path!

10. He is the One, Who sends down water from the sky
for you to drink
and for the pastures on which cattle graze.
11. With it He grows for you crops, olives,
palms, vines, and fruit of all kinds.

Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who think!

12. He has subjected to you the night and the day,
the sun and the moon; and the stars obey His Commands.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who reason!
13. He has strewn upon the earth a variety of colors.
Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who remember!

14* He is the One, Who has subjected the sea
to let you eat its fresh food
and procure the ornaments you wear.
You see the ships plowing the waters
in search of His bounties —
perhaps you will be grateful!

15. He has cast firmly standing [mountains] upon the earth
to prevent it from quaking under you,
and rivers and roads to let you follow the right path,
16. and signs — you find [your] way by the stars.

17. Can the One, Who creates be compared to someone
who does not create? Will you not come to your senses?
18. If you start counting the favors of God,
you will never be able to count them all!
Verily, God is all-forgiving and most-merciful!

19. God knows what you conceal and what you reveal.
20. But those they invoke besides God
do not create anything — they themselves have been created;
21* they are dead, they are lifeless,
and they do not know when they shall be raised.

22. Your God is One God!
But those who do not believe in the Hereafter
deny [it] in their hearts. How arrogant they are!
23. God knows for sure what they conceal and what they reveal.
Verily, He does not love the arrogant!
24. When asked:
"What has been sent down by your Lord?"
They say:
"Some tales of the Old!"
25. On Resurrection Day they shall bear their burden in full,
together with a part of the burden
of the ignorant they have led astray.
Evil shall be their burden!

26. Their predecessors have also plotted [against God],
but God knocked the supports from under their structures,
so that the roofs fell upon their heads.
The punishment came to them from where they least expected.
27. And on Resurrection Day, He will put them to shame and say:
— Where are "My partners" you were arguing about?
The people with Knowledge will say:

"Verily, shame and evil fall today upon the disbelievers!
28. The Angels will take those who have wronged their souls."
They shall humble themselves:
"We have done nothing wrong!"
— No! Verily, God knows best what you have done!
29. So enter the gates of Hell and dwell therein for ever.
Evil shall be the abode of the arrogant!
30. The God-fearing shall be told:
— What has been sent down to you by your Lord?
They shall say: "Goodness!"
Yes, goodness in this life for those who do goodness!
But still better is the abode in the Hereafter —
beautiful is this abode for the God-fearing!
31. They shall enter the Gardens of Eden
under which the rivers flow.
Therein they shall have everything they want —
this is how God will reward the God-fearing!

32. The Angels shall carry away the souls of the righteous,
saying to them:
"Peace upon you! Enter Paradise for what you have achieved!"
33. [And the others?] Are they waiting for the coming of Angels
or for the coming of your Lord's Command?
Their predecessors behaved like them:
God has not wronged them — they have wronged themselves.
34. They have been overcome by the evil of their deeds,
and what they were laughing at came to pass!

35* The Associators say:
"Had God so willed, neither we nor our fathers
would've worshiped anyone besides Him,
and we wouldn't have prohibited anything without Him."
Those who were before behaved like them.
And the Messengers?...
They have only to transmit a clear Message.

36* We used to send a Messenger to each nation:
"Worship God and avoid idolatry!"
God guided some people and let the others err.
Travel in the land and see the end of those who denied!
37. Even if you wanted to guide them,
God would not guide those He leads astray,
and nobody can help them!

38. They swear by God — their strongest oath —,
that God shall not revive the dead!"
What He pledges is true, but most people do not know [it].
39. When their quarrels are resolved,
the disbelievers will learn that they are liars.
40. Indeed, when We desire something,
it is enough for Us to say: — Be! And there it is.

41* We shall give a good home in this world to those

who fled from persecution for God's sake;
but the reward is still greater in the Hereafter,
if they [only] knew!
42. Indeed, they are those who endured and trusted their Lord!

43. We have been sending before you only men
who had received Our inspiration —
if you do not know it, ask those who keep the Reminder, —
44* men with the Proofs and the Psalms.
We have sent down the Reminder to you
to let you make clear to the people
what had been sent down to them — perhaps they will reflect!

45. Are those who plot evil so sure
that God will not make the earth swallow them,
or that the punishment shall not fall upon them
from where they expect the least,
46. or that He will not seize them during their wanderings —
indeed, they cannot frustrate Him, —
47. or that He will not eliminate them one by one.
Verily, your Lord is kindly and merciful!

48* Do they not see how the shadow
of everything that God has created
turns to the right and to the left
and prostrates itself before God in utter humility?
49. Everything in Heavens and earth
prostrates itself before God:
animals and Angels alike — nobody makes much of himself.
50. They all fear their Lord, Who towers high above them,
and they all obey His Commands!

51. God said:
— Do not take two gods for yourselves.
Indeed, God is One. And fear Me!
52. Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to Him,
and service to Him will never end.
Would you fear anyone besides God?

53. There is no mercy for you, except from God!
When misfortune touches you, you beseech him.
54. But as soon as He lifts the misfortune,
some of you start associating to their Lord,
55. denying everything We have bestowed upon them!
Enjoy yourselves for a while, but soon you shall know!

56. They give a part of the sustenance We bestowed upon them
to those about whom they do not know anything.
By God! You shall be asked about your inventions!

57* They attribute daughters to God, to Him, the glorified,
and they prefer [sons] for themselves!
58. When one of them learns about the [birth of] a daughter,

his face darkens and he succumbs to grief.
59* Ashamed at this news, he hides from the people.
Should he keep her and live in shame,
or should he bury her in the dirt? Evil is this choice!

60. Examples of evil are those who deny the Hereafter,
and the highest example [of goodness] is God!
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

61. Had God wanted to punish people for their wrong-doing,
He would not have left a single one of His creatures alive.
Instead, He gives them a reprieve for a fixed term.
When this term is up, they will not be able
either to postpone the punishment
or to advance it even by one hour.

62. They associate with God what they despise
and assert with their tongues that the best is for them.
There is no doubt that for them is the Fire
into which they shall be cast!

63. By God! We have been sending [Messengers] before you
to the people whose conduct was embellished by Satan.
Today He protects them,
but a painful punishment [is in store] for them!

64. We have sent down to you a Scripture
that explains their differences.
Let it be Guidance and mercy for the people who believe.

65. God sends water down from the sky
and uses it to revive the dead earth.
Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who listen!

66. Verily, there is a lesson for you in your cattle.
In their bellies, between excrement and blood,
We produce milk, a pure drink pleasant to the taste.
67* From the fruits of the palm trees and the vines
you get inebriating and nourishing drinks.
Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who are wise!

68. Your Lord has inspired the bee:
— Put up your hives in the hills,
on the trees, and in the buildings of people.
69. Eat of all fruit
and walk in the paths of your Lord with humility.
There comes forth from their bellies
a drink of many colors, healing for the people.
Verily, there is a Sign in this for the people who think!

70. God has created you, then He will recall you.
Some of you live to a feeble age,
when they forget everything they have known.

Verily, God is all-knowing and almighty!

71* To some of you God gives more provisions than to others.
Those who have received a larger portion
should not give their share to their slaves
to make them their equals.
Then why do they deny the mercy of God?

72. God has given you spouses like you.
From them he gave you children and grandchildren.
He has provided you with the best of provisions.
Then why do they believe in lies
and reject God's favors?

73. Besides God they worship others
who have no provisions for them in Heavens or on earth,
and who are not fit for anything.
74. Do not invent substitutes for God!
Verily, God knows, but you do not know.

75* God gives the example of a slave owned by another man
and a man who has received from Us a good sustenance
from which he spends secretly or openly.
Are they equal? Praise God, not at all!
But most of them do not know [it].

76. God gives the example of two men,
one of them dumb, unable of doing anything,
a burden to his master, unfit to fetch anything
from any place he is sent to.
Is he equal to the one who upholds justice
and stays on the right path?

77. To God belong the Unseen in Heavens and earth,
and the Hour that shall come
in the blinking of an eye, or even faster.
Verily, God has power over all things!
78. God brought you forth from your mothers' wombs
when you were ignorant of everything.
He gave you hearing, sight and a heart.
Perhaps you will be grateful!

79. Don't they see the birds soaring in the sky?
Only God can support them up there!
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who believe!

80. God has given you houses to dwell in and tents
made of the skins of cattle, that are light for you
the day when you travel and the day when you halt;
and household articles made of wool, fur, and felt
that are useful to you for a certain time.
81. God has created for you the things that give you shade;
He has made for you shelters in the mountains;

He has made for you clothes to protect you from heat
and armor to protect you in wars.
This is how He completes His goodness to you —
perhaps you will become Muslims!

82. If they turn away, your duty is only a clear transmission.
83. They first recognize the goodness of God,
and then they deny it — indeed, most of them do not believe!

84. On the Day when We call a witness from each community,
the disbelievers shall receive no dispensation
nor shall they receive any favors.
85. When the wrong-doers see the punishment,
they will not be able to reduce or to postpone it!
86. When the Associators see what they associated,
they shall say:
"O our Lord! Are these really the partners
that we used to call to besides You?"
And [the latter] will throw their words back at them:
"Truly, you're liars!"
87. On that Day, they shall submit themselves to God,
and their fakes shall vanish from their sight.
88. And for their spreading corruption,
We shall heap penalty upon penalty on those who disbelieve
and turn [others] away from the path of God.
89. The Day shall come when from each community
We will raise a witness against it,
and We will call you to testify against them.

We have sent down to you a Scripture explaining everything.
It is a Guidance and a mercy, and good news for the Muslims!

90. Verily, God commands justice, charity,
and generosity towards relatives,
and forbids indecency, deceit, and rebellion.
And He admonishes you —
perhaps you will come to your senses!
91. Fulfill God's Covenant once you have entered it.
Do not violate your oaths after swearing to them —
indeed, you have made God your guarantor,
and, verily, God knows [all] what you do.

92* Do not be like the one who unraveled to fibers a yarn
that she spun, as soon as it became strong.
Do not make deceitful oaths under the pretext
that one nation is more numerous than another one.
God is testing you by that, and on Resurrection Day
He will explain to you the matter of your disputes.
93. If God willed, He would have made you one people.
But He leaves astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills.
You shall certainly be asked to account for your deeds.

94. Do not use your oaths to deceive one another:

otherwise your foot may slip
after you have planted it firmly.
You shall taste evil for sidetracking from the path of God,
and a mighty punishment shall befall you.

95. Do not sell God's Covenant for a lowly price —
indeed, what is with God is better for you,
if you only knew!
96. What is with you shall disappear,
but what is with God shall endure.
We will surely give to the patient ones
a reward worthy of their worthiest deeds!
97* We will surely grant a good life
to the men and women who do good works and believe.
We will surely give them a reward
worthy of their worthiest deeds!

98. When you recite the Koran,
call upon God's protection from Satan, the stoned one,
99. who has no authority over those
who believe and trust their Lord.
100. He has authority only over those
who seek his protection and associate [to God].

101* When We replace one Verse by another one
(and God knows best what He has revealed), they say:
"You're a forger!"
But most of them do not understand.
102. Say:
"The Spirit of Holiness has sent the Truth
down from your Lord to strengthen the believers,
and to let it be Guidance and good tidings for the Muslims."
103. We know that they say of him:
"He's instructed by a man,"
and that they call his speech foreign,
even though it is the pure Arabic tongue!

104. God does not guide those who do not believe in God's Verses,
a painful punishment [is in store] for them.
105. Those who do not believe in God's Verses
and invent fakes are liars!

106. God's wrath and a stern punishment are for those
who first believed in God,
and then opened their hearts to disbelief
(but not for those who were forced to relapse,
while their hearts were firmly committed to faith).
107. This is because they loved the life of this world
more than the Hereafter.
Verily, God does not guide those who renounce faith.
108. God has sealed their hearts, hearing, and sight;
but they do not mind!
109. Surely, they shall be losers in the Hereafter.

110. Verily, your Lord is with those who fled from persecution,
and then fought for their faith and persevered.
Verily, your Lord is forgiving and merciful!
111. The Day shall come when each soul will fend for itself;
when each soul shall be compensated for her deeds
and shall not be wronged!

112. God gives the example of a town, peaceful and secure,
with adequate supplies from everywhere.
But its [dwellers] denied God's favors, and for their deeds
God has clothed them in the garment of hunger and fear.

113. And when a Messenger came to them from their midst,
they rejected him.
Punishment struck them while they were sinning!

114. Eat of the permitted and wholesome [food]
that God provides you with
and thank God for His favors if you worship Him.
115. He has forbidden you carrion, blood, pork, and [food]
over which a name other than God's had been invoked.
But if anyone [eats] under compulsion,
and not out of bad faith and enmity,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

116. Do not lie with your tongues:
"This's allowed, and that's forbidden,"
and do not ascribe fabrications to God.
Verily, those who ascribe falsehood to God
shall not be successful —
117. there is little profit [in it],
and painful shall be the punishment!

118. We have forbidden to the Jews what We had told you before.
We did not wrong them — they have wronged themselves.
119. For those who have done evil in ignorance,
and then repented and amended...
Verily, your Lord, even after that,
verily, your Lord is forgiving and merciful!

120*Abraham was truly an exemplary man,
a Hanif obedient to God and not an Associator.
121. He was grateful for the favors [of God],
Who chose him and guided him to the straight path.
122. We gave him goodness in this world,
and in the Hereafter he shall be among the upright.

123. — We inspired you, [o Muhammad!]: Follow the faith
of Abraham, the Hanif who was not an Associator.

124. The Sabbath was enforced on those who disputed about it.
Your Lord shall settle their quarrels on Resurrection Day.

125. Summon them to the way of your Lord with Wisdom
and good admonition; be gracious when you argue with them.
Verily, your Lord knows best who strayed from His path,
and He knows best who follows the Guidance.
126*If you want to punish them, punish them as they punish you,
but patience is better for the forbearing.

127. Be patient, for your patience is from God.
Do not grieve over them
and do not let their plots distress you.
128. Verily, God is with those who fear God and do good!

V. 14: Travel helps to learn and gain experience. Many Arabs were nomads or traders who often traveled abroad for commerce.

V. 21: On Judgment Day God will make the idols respond to Him and will confound their worshipers.

V. 35: A common objection to religion is: if God loves us, then why does He allow evil to exist?

V. 36: Nation, community — **umma** (S.3:104); evil or idolatry — **taghut** (S.39:17).

V. 41: "Who fled…for God's sake": the ones who were forced out of their houses for joining Islam.

V. 44: The Psalms (**az-zubur**), or the whole Scripture. There are many parallel passages in the Koran and the Psalter; thus, it is said in Ps.103 that the earth stands firmly and never shakes, that God grows plants to feed man and beast, that the moon keeps the time. The Koran and the Psalter are often in the same key.

Vv. 48-49: God's laws are obeyed by all creatures, animate and inanimate alike.

V. 57: "Sons," lit. "what they desire for themselves."

V. 59: Against the killing of infant girls (Cf. S.81:8-9).

V. 67: "Inebriating and nourishing drinks" — wines that were not prohibited at the time when this sura was received.

Vv. 71, 75-76: People are not equal in talent and status. A man with a superior talent must protect it and keep his ascendancy over less endowed people. The New Testament considers it from the point of view of the slave-owner: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh," (Coloss. 3:22), "with fear and trembling" (Eph. 6:5), and "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor" (I Tim. 6:1).

V. 92: "Do not make deceitful oaths": do not conclude imprudent temporary alliances just to appear numerically superior.

V. 97: Good deeds and faith are complementary. Faith as a spiritual exercise does not make man righteous if he does not practice charity and behave with dignity (Cf. S.17:22-40).

V. 101: "When We replace one Verse by another one" or "when We replace one prescription by another one" (S.87:7). God's Law is immutable, but the form under which it is communicated to man may change according to the level of his spiritual development.

V. 120: "An exemplary man" in Arabic — **umma** (nation), i.e., an ideal representative of his people (cf. v.36).

V. 126: Punishment should be commensurate with the offense, but it is always better to forgive.

V. Doxologies

Sura 17 The Night Journey. ***In this group of suras there are few descriptive passages, but numerous exhortations and repetitions. The easily recognizable Warning/Sign/Say elements are mixed with praises to God.***

S.17 is named after the statement in v. 1, which verifies the Prophet's vision of a mystical travel from Mecca to Jerusalem. This sura is sometimes called "The Children of Israel" because of its frequent references to the history of the Hebrews. The verses are often concise, and at times, impetuous. The proper behavior of the believers in society is described in vv. 22-40.

17. THE NIGHT JOURNEY

Meccan, 111 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Glory to Him who carried His Servant [Muhammad]
overnight from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque,
the vicinity of which We have blessed,
to show him some of Our Signs.
Verily, [God] is the All-hearing, the All-Seeing.

2. We gave a Scripture to Moses
to guide the Sons of Israel:
— Do not take any protector besides Me!

3. O posterity of those whom We carried with Noah!
Verily, he was a grateful servant!
4* We have warned the Children of Israel in [their] Scripture
that twice they will spread corruption on the earth,
while displaying a mighty arrogance.

5* When the first prediction came true,
We sent against you some servants of Ours
skilled in mighty warfare,

and allowed them to enter your homes.
Thus the prediction came true!
6. Then We let you overcome them.
We multiplied your wealth and your sons
and increased your number.

7. If you do good works, you do them for yourselves,
but if you do evil, you do it against your souls.
Then the second prediction came to pass
and [your enemies] disfigured your faces
when they entered the Temple as they did the first time,
destroying all that fell into their hands.
8. Perhaps your Lord will have mercy upon you,
but if you returned [to sin], We shall come back
and make of Hell a jail for the disbelievers!

9. Verily, this Koran guides you to the surest way.
It brings the tidings of a great reward
to those who believe and do the right works.
10. But for those who do not believe in the Hereafter,
We have prepared a painful punishment.
11* Man prays for evil even when he prays for goodness —
indeed, man is always in haste!

12. We have made two Signs of the night and the day.
We obscure the Sign of the night
and We brighten the Sign of the day.
This is to let you seek the bounties of your Lord,
and to know the number of years and their computation —
indeed, We explain everything in detail!

13* We have fastened the bird [of his fate]
around every man's neck.
And on Resurrection Day, We will give him a Scroll
that he shall see wide open:
14. — Read your Record.
You will balance your account today!

15. Whoever accepts Guidance, it is for his good,
and whoever goes astray, it is for his loss.
The bearer of a burden
should not bear another man's burden.
We never punish without first sending a Messenger.
16. Each time We wanted to destroy a town,
We announced Our decision to those
who lived there in comfort and persisted in sinning.
And to fulfill the sentence pronounced against them,
We used to destroy them completely.
17. How many generations have We exterminated after Noah!
Sufficient is your Lord to know
and to observe the sins of His servants.
18. If they desire the fleeting things,
We will hasten what pleases Us and to whom it pleases Us.

Then We will dispatch them to Hell
where they shall burn, condemned and rejected.

19. But those who desire the Hereafter
strive to it with their strongest striving
and believe that their effort will be recognized.
20. We give the gifts of your Lord to everybody —
to these ones and to those ones,
for the gifts of your Lord are limitless.
21. You see that We give to some more than to others,
but the range in ranks and distinctions
will be still greater in the Hereafter!

22* Do not associate another god with God,
lest you be condemned and vilified.
23. Your Lord demands that you serve no one but Him
and that you be kind to your parents.
Do not tell them "fie" and do not reproach them
when one or both of them reach old age, but respect them!
24* Out of compassion, lower before them the wing of humility
and say:
"O my Lord! Have mercy upon them,
for they raised me since I was little."
25. Your Lord knows best what is in your soul.
If you are righteous…
Verily, He forgives those who turn to Him.

26* Give their due to [your] relatives,
also to the needy and to the wayfarer,
but do not be a spendthrift,
27. for the spendthrifts are the brothers of Satans
and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord.

28. Speak to the [people] a kindly word
even if you turned away from them
in pursuit of the desired mercy of your Lord.

29. Do not tie your hand to your neck,
but do not stretch it too far either,
lest you be among the rebuked and the destitute.
30. Verily, your Lord gives and distributes
rich sustenance to anyone He pleases.
Verily, He knows His servants and He observes them.

31. Do not slay your children if you fear poverty
because We will provide for them and for you!
Verily, slaying them is a great sin.

32. Do not indulge in fornication,
indeed, it is an abomination, a foul way!

33* Do not kill a life that God has made untouchable,
except for just cause.

If anyone is killed wrongfully,
We give his next of kin the right [of redress].
But let him not go to excess in slaying —
indeed, [the law] is on his side.

34. Manage the estate of an orphan before his majority,
but only in order to improve it.
And fulfill [your] promises —
verily, you are accountable for your commitments.
35. Give full measure when you measure,
and weigh on an accurate scale —
this is fairer and better in the long run.

36. Do not pursue what you have no knowledge about —
verily, your sight, hearing, and heart
will be accountable for everything.
37. And do not strut on the earth with arrogance!
Verily, you cannot split the earth
nor grow as tall as the mountains!
38. All this is evil that is hateful to your Lord.
39. This is part of the Wisdom inspired to you by your Lord.
So do not associate to God any other god,
lest you be cast into Hellfire, despised and rejected.

40. Is it possible that your Lord prefers sons for you,
and daughters from among the Angels for Himself?
Verily, appalling are your words!

41. We gave explanations in this Koran to warn you,
but it only increases their aversion!
42. Say:
"If, as they pretend, there were gods besides Him,
surely they would have tried
to find their way to the Lord of the Throne!"
43. Glory to Him! Exalted He is above what they say,
exalted [He is] and great!
44. The seven Heavens and the earth,
and all that is therein celebrate Him in praise.
There is nothing that would not glorify Him!
But this praise is beyond your understanding.
Verily, He is forbearing and forgiving!

45* — [O Muhammad!] When you recite the Koran,
We drop an invisible curtain between you
and those who do not believe in the Hereafter.

46. We cover their hearts with veils
and put deafness in their ears
to prevent them from understanding it.
When you mention your Lord in the Koran,
and Him alone, they turn away in aversion.

47. We know well what they hear when they listen to you.

In their secret meetings the wrong-doers say:
"You follow a man who is bewitched!"
48. You see whom they compare you to!
Yes, they are astray and cannot find a way out.
49. They say:
"Would we be really revived in a new creation
after we became bones and dust?"
50* Say:
"Yes, even if you were stone or iron,
51. or any created matter that you think is superior to it!"
Then they shall say:
"Who will revive us?"
Say:
"The One Who created you from the beginning!"
Then they will nod in your direction and say:
"When will it happen?"
Say:
"Soon enough, perhaps.
52* On the Day when He calls you, you will answer Him
by praising Him and it will seem to you
that you had waited for just a little while."

53* Tell My servants to speak only of what is best.
Verily, Satan is sowing discord among them.
Verily, Satan is man's sworn enemy!
54. But your Lord knows you best.
He will have mercy upon you if He wills,
and He will punish you if He wills.
We have not sent you to be their caretaker!
55* Your Lord knows best those
who are in Heavens and on earth.
To some Prophets We gave more than to others.
To David We gave the Psalter.

56. Say:
"Call upon anyone you wish besides Him,
but they won't remove your distress or change [it]."
57* And those they are calling to,
even the nearest [to God]
look for a way to be still closer to their Lord.
They hope for His mercy and fear His wrath.
Verily, beware of the wrath of your Lord!
58. There is no town We will not wreck before Resurrection Day
or will not subject to a stern punishment:
so it is written in the Book.
59. We refrained from sending the Signs
only because the first [generations] had rejected them.

We sent a she-camel to [the people of] Thamood
to open their eyes, but they treated her unjustly.
And now We send Signs only for intimidation!

60* We have already told you that, verily,

your Lord encompasses all people.
To test the people,
We gave them the vision We showed you
and the cursed tree mentioned in the Koran.
Thus We intimidate them,
but it only increases their mighty aggression.

61. When We said to the Angels:
— Prostrate yourselves before Adam,
they all prostrated themselves, except Iblis, who said:
"Why should I prostrate myself
before someone You've created from clay?"
62* He [also] said:
"Have You looked at the one You honored above me!
Give me a reprieve till Resurrection Day
and I'll surely subjugate all his posterity, but a few!"
63. [God] said:
— Go away! And if anyone of them follows you,
then Hell shall be your reward,
a reward to the fullest!
64. Seduce whomever you can with your voice,
assault them with your horsemen and footmen,
share with them money, children, and promises,
but Satan's promises are bare deception!
65. Verily, you shall have no power over My servants.
Sufficient is your Lord as a caretaker.

66* Your Lord is the One who propels your ships at sea
to let you search for His bounty.
Verily, He is merciful to you!
67. When distress befalls you out at sea,
those whom you invoke besides Him disappear.
But when He brings you back to dry land,
you turn away from Him. Man is so ungrateful!

68. How can you be sure
that He will not make the ground swallow you
or He will not send upon you a sandstorm,
or He will not leave you without a caretaker?
69. Are you sure that He will not return you [to the sea]
and send a terrible storm
to drown you for your ingratitude
and leave you without any defender against Us?
70. We used to honor the children of Adam:
We transported them by land and by sea,
We supplied them with good provisions,
and We preferred them over a multitude of Our creatures.

71* On the Day We summon all men with their leaders,
some of them will receive their Record in their right hand.
They shall read their Record
and shall not be wronged by the skin of a date stone.
72. But the blind in this [world]
shall be blind in the Hereafter and still farther astray.

73* Their purpose is to tempt you away
from what We have revealed to you
in order to make you fabricate lies about Us.
Then, they will surely befriend you.
74. Had We not strengthened you,
you could have leaned toward them just a little.
75. Then We would have made you taste a double [punishment]
in life and a double [punishment] in death,
and you would not have found any helper against Us!
76. Their purpose is to drive you away from the land.
But after you they shall stay on it only a little while.
77. [Such was] the Way of the Messengers
whom We had been sending before you,
and you will find no changes in Our Way!

78* Keep up the prayer from sunset to the darkness of the night
and [keep up] the recitation at daybreak.
Verily, witnesses are present at the daybreak recitation!
79* During the night perform an additional prayer for your good,
then your Lord might raise you to an admirable position!
80* Say:
"O my Lord! Let me enter through the gate of Honor
and exit through the exit of Honor,
and grant me the strength and help of Your Presence."
81. Say:
"Truth has arrived and falsehood has vanished.
Verily, falsehood is bound to disappear!"

82. We are sending with the Koran
healing and mercy to the believers,
but to the disbelievers
it only increases their losses.
83. When We bestow Our favors to a man,
he turns away and steps aside.
But as soon as evil touches him,
he sinks into despair.
84. Say:
"Every one behaves as he wills,
but your Lord knows best whose way is the straightest."
85* They ask you about the Spirit. Say:
"The Spirit depends on my Lord,
but you're given only a tiny bit of Knowledge."
86. If We pleased, We could take away
what We have revealed to you — in this matter
you shall not find an intercessor before Us,
87. if not for the mercy of your Lord.
Verily, great is His favor to you!
88. Say:
"If all men and Jinn met together
to produce a Koran like this one,
then even if they joined forces,
they wouldn't create anything like it!"

89. In this Koran We propose various analogies to man,
yet most people reject everything, except disbelief.
90. They say:
"We won't believe you until you make a spring
gush forth for us from the ground,
91. or until you get an orchard
with date palms and grape vines,
through which you'll make abundant rivers flow,
92. or until, as you have promised,
you crash the sky in pieces upon us
or bring before us God and the Angels,
93. or until you get a gilt house, or ascend to Heaven.
But even then we won't believe in your ascension
until you send down to us a writing we can read."
Say:
"Glory to my Lord! I'm only a man and a Messenger!"

94. When Guidance reaches the people,
what keeps them from believing more than their words:
"Is it possible that God has sent a man as a Messenger?"
95. Say:
"If Angels could walk confidently on earth,
surely, We should've sent down an Angel as a Messenger."

96. Say:
"God is sufficient as a witness between us!
Verily, He knows and observes His servants."
97. Only the one guided by God is on right way,
but for the one He misleads,
you would not find any protector, except Him.
On Resurrection Day
We will gather them face down,
blind, dumb, and deaf!
Their abode shall be Hell,
and each time it gets quiet,
We will rekindle its Fire!

98. Such shall be their reward
for rejecting Our Signs and saying:
"Shall we be revived in a new Creation
after we've been reduced to bones and dust?"
99. Do they not see that God,
Who has created the Heavens and the earth,
is capable of creating [others] like them?
He has fixed a term which cannot be doubted,
yet the disbelievers reject everything, but disbelief!
100. Say:
"If you controlled the treasuries of my Lord's mercy,
you would have clung to them, fearing to spend —
indeed, man is so greedy!"

101. We gave Moses nine clear Signs —
ask about them the Children of Israel.

When he arrived, Pharaoh said to him:
"O Moses! I think you're bewitched!"
102. [Moses] said:
"You know that these [Signs]
have been sent down as Proofs
by no other than the Lord of Heavens and earth.
O Pharaoh! I see that your days are counted!"

103. [Pharaoh] decided to drive them off the land,
but We drowned them all, him and his followers.
104* Then We said to the Children of Israel:
— Settle on the land,
and when the promise of the Hereafter comes true,
We will gather you all together.

105. We have sent down [the Koran] in Truth
and in Truth it has descended.
We have sent you only as an announcer and a warner.

106* We have divided the Koran
to let you recite it to the people in sections —
this is why We have sent it down in stages.
107. Say:
"Believe or believe it not, but those
who have received Knowledge before, prostrate themselves
and fall down on their beards when it is recited to them.
108. They say: 'Glory to our Lord!
Verily, the promise of our Lord is coming true.'"
109. They fall down on their beards in tears
and grow in humility.
110* Say:
"Call upon God or call upon the Compassionate —
by whatever Name you call Him,
He has the most beautiful Names!"
Don't be too loud in your prayer
and don't whisper either, but follow the middle way.
111. Say:
"Praise be to God! He hasn't taken a son for Himself
and He has no partner in [His] Kingdom!
He doesn't need protection from humiliation —
so glorify His greatness!"

V. 1: These two places of worship are the **Ka'ba** in Mecca and the "Remote Mosque" **Al-Aqsa** on the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (**Al-Quds**, meaning "the Sanctified").

Fervor cannot be inspired by reason alone. Religion needs striking imagery and supernatural visions: a teacher speaking from a mountain top, an innocent man dying on the cross, a Prophet carried to Heaven in a chariot or from city to city on a white horse.

The Prophet's vision produced a strong impression on his followers who added to it several legends. Thus, the Prophet's horse had a woman's face and was called **al-Buraq (barq** means lightning) because of its speed. It is the symbol of the intellect which can grasp in a flash the reality of the world.

V. 4: Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian King Nabuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., then by the Romans under Titus in A.D. 70.

V. 5: "Our servants skilled in mighty warfare" — these were the Babylonian warriors who attacked Jerusalem.

V. 11: Man is in haste in his mindlessness and hurry.

V. 13: The Arabs imagined that fate was hanging around each man's neck in the shape of a bird.

Vv. 22-40: As Islam reaches maturity, the stories of the Prophets become shorter and attention is shifted to Abraham.

V. 24: The wing of humility: a metaphor for protection.

Vv. 26-29: An appeal to restraint and moderation.

V. 33: The Biblical retaliation "eye for an eye" is softened by moderation. The **wali** — "next of kin," defender, caretaker.

Vv. 45-46: Predestination is supported both by the Old and the New Testament. For example, God has hardened Pharaoh's heart to make him block the exodus of the Jews (Exod. 4:21); in the New Testament it is said: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14), and "Unto you is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:11-12).

Vv. 50-51: "Even if you were stone or iron, or any created matter that you think superior to it!" — i.e., even if you were made of stone or iron, or any other substance that you consider more difficult to revive.

V. 52: They waited, presumably, in their graves.

V. 53: One should be fair both to enemies and friends.

V. 55: Man should not presume, who is near God. All Prophets were not equal because their Scriptures were not equally vital.

V. 57: It is not proper to address prayers to those who are in Heaven because those nearest to God turn only to Him. Muslims face God directly while Christians address God through the Church, Jesus, Mary, the saints, a priest, or a preacher. To explain their relation to God, the Christians use elaborate theological constructions that Islam dispense with.

V. 60: "We have told you..." — cf. S.72:28. The accursed tree is the **zakkum** of S.37:62.

V. 62: God has placed man above the Angels precisely because only man can disobey God, and then repent and be redeemed.

Vv. 66f: The Koran often refers to the sea and to sailors in illustrating God's benevolence towards man, though both Mecca and Medina are inland, and the Prophet seems to have never been at sea.

V. 71: The leaders or **imams**.

V. 73: "They" may be the Idolaters in general or the Quraish.

V. 78: Here the "witnesses" are the Angels.

V. 79: The voluntary supplemental prayer after midnight is called **Tahajjud**.

V. 80: "Grant me the power and help of Your Presence" or "grant me righteousness from birth till death."

V. 85: The Jews are asking about the "Spirit," which may also be "inspiration" or "the soul of man," and not only Gabriel.

V. 104: The first promise or warning is in v.5; the second one, in v.7. The "promise of the Hereafter" is the third one.

V. 106: It is implied that a substantial part of the Koran had already been revealed at that time.

V. 110: A Muslim prays to one God, even when he calls to Him by His different Names.

SURA 30 THE GREEKS. ***S.30 is a typical sura made of Warnings, Signs, and appeals to the Prophet. Its name "Greeks, "Romans" or "Byzantines" comes from vv. 2-5 that predict a Greek victory over Persia in the interest of the Muslims. Vv. 17-27 remind of some of David's Psalms.***

30. *THE GREEKS*
Meccan, 60 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim.
2* The Greeks have been defeated
3. in a nearby land,
but after their defeat they will be victorious
4. in a few years.
As in the past and the future,
all power is in God's hands.
But on that day the believers shall rejoice
5. at God's assistance —
indeed, God assists anyone He wills.
He is the Sublime, the Merciful.

6. God has made a promise,
and God never fails at His promise,
but most people do not know [it].
7. They know only the manifest in the present life,
and they are indifferent to the Hereafter.
8* They should ponder that God has created
the Heavens and the earth and everything in between
by the Truth and for a fixed time.
Yet, many people deny the meeting with their Lord.

9. Do they not travel upon the earth
and see what was the end of their predecessors,
although they exceeded them in power?
They cultivated the land and populated it faster
than the people of today.
Their Messengers used to come to them with the Proofs.
God did not wrong them — they have wronged themselves!

10. Evil will be the end of those who did evil —
indeed, they denied the Signs of God and mocked them!
11. God begins a Creation, then He repeats it;
and later you shall be returned to Him.

12. On the Day when the Hour comes,
the sinners shall fall in despair.
13. The partners they associate [to Him] will not protect them,
and they will reject those they have associated.
14. On the Day when the Hour comes,
on that Day, they shall be sorted out.
15* Those who have believed and have done good deeds
shall enjoy themselves in luxuriant meadows.
16. But those who have disbelieved and denied Our Signs
and the meeting in the Hereafter
shall be lead to punishment.

17* Glorify God when the evening draws near
and in the morning when you rise.
18. Praise be to Him in Heavens and earth
after midday and when the day declines!
19. He raises the living from the dead
and the dead from the living.
He revives the earth after it had died.
And so He will revive you!

20. Among His Signs is that He has created you from dust
and that you, human beings, are scattered everywhere.
21. Among His Signs is that He has created from you
the spouses that share your lives
and that He has established love and mercy between you.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who think!
22* Among His Signs is that He has created Heavens and earth
and made you different in tongues and complexion.
Verily, there are Signs in this for those who know!
23. Among His Signs is your nightly sleep
and your pursuit of His bounty during the day.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who listen!
24. Among His Signs is that He displays to you
the lightning that carries fear and hope,
and that He sends down water from the sky
and revives the earth after it has died.
Verily, there are Signs in this for people with sense!
25. Among His Signs are the Heaven and the earth
that stand by His command.
When He summons you from the earth by a single call,
you shall come forth at once!

26. To Him belongs everything in the Heavens and earth,
and everything is subservient to Him!
27. He is the One, Who starts Creation
and then repeats it. That is easy for Him!
He is the highest example in Heavens and earth.

He is the Sublime, the Wise.
28* He sets for you your own example.
Do you have any partners among your slaves
with whom you equally share the wealth
that We have bestowed upon you?
Do you fear them as much as you fear one another?
This is how We explain the Signs to people with sense.

29. The wrong-doers lack Knowledge and follow their passions.
But who will guide those whom God leaves astray?
They shall have no helpers!

30* Turn your face toward religion as a hanif.
It is God's Design by which He has established mankind.
Permanent is God's Creation! This is the true religion,
but most people do not know [it].
31. So turn to Him, fear Him, observe the prayer,
and do not be an Associator!

32. They split their religion into sects,
and each party is happy with what it possesses.
33. When hardship touches people, they turn to their Lord
and call to Him in repentance,
but when He gives them a taste of His mercy,
some of them associate to their Lord
34. and reject what We have given to them.
Let you rejoice [now], but soon you shall know!
35. Have We sent down to them the authority
to choose whom they associate?
36. When We give people a taste of Our mercy, they exult in it;
when evil hits them for their deeds, they fall in despair.
37. Do they not see how God increases or decreases
His provision to anyone He wills?
Verily, there are Signs in this for people who believe!

38. Give their due to your kinsman, the poor, and the wayfarer.
This is better for those who seek the Countenance of God —
they will achieve success!
39* God will not increase [your worth]
if you give loans to sponge on the wealth of the people.
But if you pay the zakat and seek the Countenance of God,
you will receive twice as much in return.

40. God is the One Who has created you.
Then He provided for you, then He will cause you to die.
Then He will return you to life!
Is there among those you associate [with Him]
any one capable of doing something like that?
Praise be to Him! Exalted He is above what they associate!
41. Corruption has appeared on land and sea
because of what people had made with their hands.
Let them have a taste of their deeds —
perhaps they will return [to God]!

42. Say:
“Travel about on the land and see
what was the end of your predecessors —
indeed, most of them were Associators.”

43. Turn your face to the true religion
before the inevitable Day comes from God —
the Day when all the people are sorted out.
44. Denial shall turn against those who denied,
but those who did right will spread their own bedding.
45. [God] will reward from His bounty those who believed
and did right — He does not like those who disbelieve!

46. Among His Signs is His sending of winds
as carriers of good tidings
to let you have a taste His mercy,
to let the ships sail under His Command,
to let you seek His bounty — perhaps you will be grateful!

47. — [O Muhammad!] Before you We had been sending
to the nations Messengers who came to them with the Proofs.
Then We retaliated against the sinners —
indeed, Our privilege is to assist the believers.
48. God is the One, Who sends the winds,
which raise the clouds; He spreads them over the sky
or tears to pieces, as He wills.
You see how raindrops seep down between them.
He dispenses the rain upon those of His servants
as He wills, and they rejoice [at it],
49. even though they had lost hope before it came down.
50. Look at the marks of God’s mercy,
at how He revives the earth after it has died!
Verily, He is the Reviver of the dead —
He has power over everything.
51. But even if We send the wind,
and they see that everything turns yellow,
still they would not believe.

52. — [O Muhammad!] You cannot make the dead listen,
just as you cannot make the deaf hear [your] call
if they turn their backs and go away.
53. Nor can you guide the blind when they go astray.
You will be heard only by those
who believed in Our Signs and became Muslims.

54. God is the One, Who has created you weak,
then He replaced your weakness with strength.
Then He will replace your strength
with weakness and white hair.
He creates as He wills — He is the Knowing, the Powerful.

55. The Day when the Hour comes, the sinners shall swear
that they have waited not more than one hour,

so great is their delusion!
56. But those who were given Knowledge and faith will say:
"Yes, by God's Decision,
you've stayed there till Resurrection Day.
Didn't you notice that Resurrection Day is today!"
57. On that Day no excuse shall help the wrong-doers:
they shall not be allowed to repent.

58. We are bringing up many examples for men in this Koran.
But show any Sign to the disbelievers
and they will surely say:
"You're only deceiving [us]!"
59. This is how God sealed the hearts of the ignorant!

60. — [O Muhammad!] Be patient! Verily, God's promise is true.
Do not be unsettled by those who are unsteady in faith!

V. 2: The capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in A.D. 614.

Vv. 2-5: The Muslims sided with the Greeks against Persia, and the Quraish sided with the Persians. Heraclius invaded Persia in 624, the year of the Muslim victory over the Meccans at Badr.

V. 15: Here Paradise is **rawda**, "a luxuriant meadow."

Vv. 17-18: Faith (iman) is built on 1) personal devotion to God (ihsan); 2) sincerity (ikhlas); 3) Knowledge (ma'rifa); 4) submission to God (islam); and 5) good deeds and compassion to man.

V. 22: "For those who know" or "for the Worlds."

V. 28: "One another" or "yourselves." This verse states that the established order on earth is tolerated by God.

V. 30: Islam is everlasting, universal, standard and basic, as expected from a religion that is conform to the nature of man.

V. 39: Interest is illegal and so is modern banking.

V. 51: It is useless to call to Islam those whom God has deprived of His grace.

SURA 13 THUNDER. ***Revealed at Medina, S.13 is one of the latest suras. It is mostly of the Sign/Say type and it sustains a strong doxological mood. In v. 37 the Koran is called the Codex of Laws.***

V.7 of this sura has led to separatist discussions. According to the Shi'ites, "the Warner and the Guide" of this verse is 'Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. They also believe that the presumed 115-th sura The Two Lights, glorifying both Muhammad and 'Ali, has been suppressed by the enemies of the latter.

13. THE THUNDER
Medinan, 43 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alif lam mim ra.
These are Verses from the Scripture.

What has been sent down to you from your Lord is the Truth,
but most people still do not believe.

2. God is the One, Who has raised the Heavens
without visible supports,
and then sat securely upon the Throne.
He controls the sun and the moon,
and everything runs [its course] in a fixed time.
He manages the Design and explains the Signs —
perhaps you will believe in the meeting with your Lord?

3* He is the One, Who has spread the earth
and distributed on it mountain peaks and rivers;
He has grown all the fruits in pairs;
He veils the day with the darkness of the night.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who think!
4. There are adjacent plots on the land
with vineyards and corn fields,
with palm-trees [growing] single or otherwise,
irrigated with the same water.
We have made some of them more fitting for food than others.
Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who reason!

5* This puzzles you, but more puzzling are their words:
"Shall we be revived in a new Creation
after we turned to dust?"
They are the ones who reject their Lord!
With chains 'round their necks,
they shall dwell in the Fire and stay in it for ever!

6. They hasten you with wickedness instead of goodness,
though exemplary punishments have been meted before them.
Verily, your Lord is ready to forgive people their sins,
but, verily, your Lord is stern in punishment!

7. The disbelievers say:
"Why doesn't his Lord send him a Sign?"
Truly, you are a Warner and a Guide for all nations!

8. God knows what each female will bear in her womb,
how briefly or how long —
everything is in due measure with Him.
9. He knows the Unseen and the manifest,
He is the Great, the Sublime!

10. You are the same, the one who conceals his speech
and the one who speaks openly,
the one who hides in the night
and the one who gets out in daylight.
11* Every man has Guardians ahead of him and behind him,
who guard him as God commands.

Verily, God will not change a man,

unless the man changes himself!
But if God intends to punish someone,
nobody can repeal it —
they have no protector besides Him.

12. He is the One, Who displays to you
the lightning that brings fear and hope.
He piles up heavy clouds,
13. thunder glorifies Him in praise
and the Angels join in awe of Him!
He sends thunderbolts to strike anyone He wills.
Yet they still argue about God,
although mighty is His vengeance!

14* True prayer is for Him alone!
Those they call upon besides Him do not hear anything.
It is like extending a hand to water
wishing that it will reach your mouth.
But no, it will not reach it!
So the prayer of the disbelievers is just a deception!

15. All those who are in the Heavens and earth
prostrate themselves before God willingly or unwillingly,
and their shadows do the same mornings and evenings!

16. Say:
"Who's the Lord of the Heavens and earth?
Say:
"It's God."
Say:
"Then why do you need other protectors besides Him
if they neither benefit nor harm you?"
Say:
"Can the blind be compared to the sharp-sighted?
Can darkness be compared to light?"
Or have they found that God has some partners
who have created as He has created,
so that their creations seem to be alike?
Say:
"God is the Creator of all things.
He's the One, the Victorious!"

17. Down from the sky He sends the water
that is apportioned among the streams.
A scum rises in them,
and the current carries it away.
A scum is also formed
when [ores] are smelted in the fire
to make ornaments and utensils.
This is how God compares the true to the false:
The scum disappears without a trace,
and what is useful for man remains on the ground —
this is how God comes up with analogies!

18. Goodness is for those who respond to their Lord,
but those who do not respond to Him
will not redeem themselves with what is on earth,
even with twice as much.
Dreadful will be their Reckoning!
Hell will be their abode — evil is that bedding!

19. Is a man like a blind one if he knows that
what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the Truth?
Only the wise remember [God] —
20. they fulfill the Covenant of God and keep their promises,
21* They join what God has commanded to join.
They are in awe before their Lord and fear an evil Account.
22. They persist in striving to the Countenance of their Lord;
they observe the prayer, contribute openly and secretly
from what We have given to them,
they repel evil with goodness.
An everlasting dwelling shall be given to them:

23* the Gardens of Eden they shall enter with the righteous
among their fathers, spouses, and offspring.
The Angels shall enter through every gate [saying]:
24. "Peace upon you for your perseverance!
Splendid is your last abode!"

25. But the lot of those who broke the Covenant of God
after they promised to uphold it,
shall be a curse and an evil dwelling!
They used to separate what God has commanded to join,
and to spread corruption in the land.

26. God increases or reduces the provision to anyone He wills.
Everyone enjoys the life of this world,
but compared to the Hereafter,
the life of this world is just a pastime.

27. The disbelievers say:
"Why hasn't a Sign been sent to him from his Lord?"
Say:
"God sends astray any one He wills,
and He guides to Himself only those who turn [to Him],
28. those who believe, and those whose hearts
find comfort in remembering God —
indeed, only the remembrance of God comforts the hearts!
29. And [He also guides] those
who believed and did good works.
Let them enjoy bliss and a good place of rest!"

30. We have sent you to a people
that came in the wake of many [others].
Recite to them what We have inspired you with,
even if they reject the Merciful!

Say:
“He’s my Lord! There’s no god but Him!
I trust in Him and to Him I turn.”

31* If the Koran could move the mountains,
split the earth, and untie the tongues of the dead!...
But the entire Design is in God’s hands.
And do not the believers know that had God so willed,
He would have guided all men on the right path.
Until God’s promise is fulfilled,
calamities will not cease to plague the disbelievers
for what they have done,
and they will settle near their dwellings.
Verily, God will not fail in His promise!

32. Messengers have been ridiculed before your time.
I respited the disbelievers, then I seized them —
and terrible was My punishment!

33* Who other than Him stands over each soul
and over what she has done?
Yet they associate partners with God.
Say:
“Name them! Or do you want to tell Him
something He doesn’t know on the earth?
Or you’re just playing with words?”
The plots of the disbelievers are made attractive to them
to seduce them away from the right path.
One cannot guide a man God has led astray!
34. There is a punishment for them in the present life,
but the punishment in the Hereafter
will be much more distressing,
and they will have no protector against God!

35. Here is the example of the Garden
promised to the God-fearing.
Rivers flow under it,
and it will always have [plenty] of food and shade.
Such is the destiny of the God-fearing,
but the destiny of the disbelievers is the Fire!

36. Those to whom We have given the Scripture
rejoice in what has been sent down to you,
but some sects reject some parts of it.
Say:
“I’ve been commanded to worship God and not to associate.
To Him I call, and to Him is my return.”

37. We have sent down [the Koran] as an Arabic Codex of Laws.
But if you follow their passions after receiving Knowledge,
you will have no helper and no protector before God.

38. We have been sending Messengers before your time

and We gave them wives and children.
No Messenger has ever brought a single Verse
without God's approval!
There was a Scripture for each period of time.
39* God cancels or confirms whatever He wills —
indeed, the Mother of Scripture is with Him.
40. Shall We show you part of Our promise to them,
or shall We [first] let you die...
You are to transmit, and We are to account.

41* Do they not see that We walk upon [their] land,
shrinking its boundaries?

When God judges, nothing opposes His Judgment —
fast He is at accounting!
42. Their predecessors have been plotting as well,
but all their plots are in God's hands,
and He knows what each soul has acquired.
Soon the disbelievers shall know
who will get [the best] abode.

43. The disbelievers say:
"You're not a Messenger!"
Say:
"God is a sufficient witness between us,
between you and the one who knows the Scripture."

V. 3: "All fruits in pairs": edible or inedible, sweet or sour, wild or cultivated?

V. 5: Several verses in this sura seem to be incomplete. The thing that puzzles the Prophet is probably lack of faith on the part of the disbelievers.

V. 11: "Guardians," lit., "those who follow." Each man is responsible for his salvation that is achieved by passing such of God's trials or tests as poverty and wealth. If people lost faith, tests would be useless, and the only way opened to them would be the way to Hell (cf. S.43:33).

V, 13: Thunder (**barq**) may be good in some of its manifestations (then it might be synonymous with lightning). It may kill, but it also proclaims the majesty of God.

V. 15: Prayer as a personal appeal to God (**da'wa** or **du'a**).

V. 21: God has ordered to join faith to actions. True love for God is not possible without caring for fellow man.

V. 23: The believers will enter Paradise not only with their believing spouses (S.43:70), but also with their entire families.

Vs. 30f and v. 41 seem to refer to events that took place after the treaty of Hudabiya, in 6-8 H.

V. 31: Without predestination everyone would have a chance to be saved, and this would have been unjust to the believers.

V. 33: Its first words endorse the idea of a personal God.

V. 35: "Food," both in its material and spiritual meaning.

V. 39: God can alter the Koranic Verses (S.87:7), if not, how can be His power unlimited?

V. 41: A reference to some territorial loss by the Muslims.

”The one who knows the Scripture” is the one who received the Revelation. “The One Who knows the Scripture” is God.

SURA 45 KNEELING. ***Natural events and the Koranic Verses prove the existence of God. Man has every opportunity to understand the Signs and the Verses and to believe in them. God will judge each nation by its Scripture; the Jews will have to answer for defaming Islam.***

45. K N E E L I N G
Meccan, 37 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2. This is a Revelation of the Scripture from God,
the Mighty, the Wise.
3. Verily, in Heavens and earth
there are Signs for the believers.

4. In your creation and in the dispersion of animals,
there are Signs for people with conviction.
5. In the succession of night and day,
in the pouring of God's sustenance down from the sky,
in the awakening of the earth after it became lifeless,
and in the shifting of the winds,
there are Signs for people with sense.
6. Such are the Verses of God
which We recite to you in Truth.
What words would they believe
if they reject God and His Signs?

7. Woe to every sinful liar!
8. When the Verses of God are recited to him, he listens,
but then, out of stubbornness and pride,
he pretends that he did not hear them!
So announce to him a painful punishment.
9. When he learns something about Our Verses, he mocks them.
For such [people] there is a humiliating punishment.
10. Before them is Hell, and neither their acquisitions
nor the protectors they have taken besides God
will help them — a great punishment [is in store] for them!
11. Such is Guidance! And for those who reject the Signs of
their Lord — a painful punishment of abomination!

12. God is the One, Who has subjected to you the sea
to let the ships sail upon it at His Command,
opening for you the way to His bounty.
Perhaps you will be grateful!

13. He has subjected to you from Himself
everything in Heavens and earth.

Verily, there are Signs in this for the people who think!
14* Tell the believers to forgive those
who do not hope for the Days of God.
Everybody shall be rewarded according to his deeds.
15. Whoever does good, does it for his soul;
whoever does evil, does it against her.
In the end you shall be returned to your Lord.

16. We gave the Children of Israel in the past
the Scripture, the Wisdom and the Prophecy.
We gave them the best of provisions,
and We favored them in the Worlds.
17* We gave them the Proofs of [Our] Design, but they split
after receiving Knowledge because of their mutual hatred.
Verily, your Lord will judge
their differences on Resurrection Day.
18* We gave you the laws of religion.
Follow them and do not follow the passions of the ignorant
19. who will not help you before God in the least.
Verily, they protect one another,
but God is the Protector of the God-fearing.

20. These are clear Proofs for [all] people,
a Guidance and a mercy for people with conviction.
21. Do those who do evil think that We will treat them
like those who believed and did good works,
and that they are alike in life and in death?
Bad is their judgment!
22. God has created the Heavens and earth in Truth
to reward each soul for what she has earned.
Nobody shall be wronged!
23. Have you seen the one who worships his passions?
Knowing him, God let him lose his way,
sealed his hearing and heart, and veiled his sight.
Who will guide him beside God?
Will you not come to your senses?

24. They say:
"There nothing in this world, except our life!
We live and we die, and only time has power over us!"
But they do not know anything about it —
they are only guessing.

25. When Our instructive Verses are recited to them,
they follow one track in their mind and say:
"Bring our fathers back if you're telling the truth!"
26. Say:
"God gave you life, then He'll make you die, and in the end
He'll gather you on Resurrection Day that can't be doubted!"
But most people do not know [it]!

27. To God belongs the Kingdom of Heavens and earth.
On the Day when the Hour is due —

the Day when the liars shall perish, —
28. you shall see all the communities kneeling.
Then each community shall be called [to account]
according to its Scripture.
— Today you shall be rewarded for all you have done!
29. Here is Our Account with all the truth about you —
indeed, We have recorded all your deeds.
30. Their Lord will take into His mercy
those who believed and did good.
This shall be an obvious success.

31. But those who rejected God [shall hear]:
— Were not My Verses recited to you?
But you became arrogant and joined the sinful people.
32. When told that the promise of God is true
and that the Hour cannot be doubted, you said:
"We don't know what this Hour is about.
We think it's just a guess; we aren't sure of it."
33. The evil of their deeds shall appear before them
when they are encircled by what they were laughing at.
34. They will be told:
— Today We shall forget about you, just as you forgot
about the meeting of this Day. You will dwell in the Fire,
and you will not find anyone to help you!
35. This is because you took the Signs of God in jest
and were seduced by the life of this world.
From that Day on they shall not have a way out,
and they shall not receive any favor.

36. Praised be God, the Lord of the Heavens,
the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the Worlds!
37. Glory to Him in Heavens and earth!
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

V. 14: "The Days of God" — probably, the Afterlife.

V. 17: Some Arabian Jews have received the Koranic Message, but the new Revelation only increased dissensions among them.

V. 18: "The laws of religion" or the **shari'a** (shariah).

SURA 67 THE KINGDOM. *S.67 is Psalm-like. It is mainly a Doxology followed by a few "Say" passages.*

67. THE KINGDOM
Meccan, 37 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Blessed be the One in whose hands is the Kingdom.
He has power over all things.

2* He has created death and life to test
who is the best of you in deeds.
He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.

3* He has created seven skies in layers.
You will not see any disproportion
in what has been created by the Compassionate.
Look! Do you see any flaw?
4. Look again, and your gaze will return to you,
confused and exhausted.

5. We have adorned the lower sky with lights
that We made to repel the Satans.
To punish them We have prepared a blazing Fire.
6* For those who rejected their Lord,
their punishment is Hellfire — what an evil outcome!
7. As they are thrown into it,
they shall hear it gurgling and surging,
8. about to burst in a fury!
Each time a group is thrown in, its Keepers will ask:
"Hasn't a Warner come to you?
9. They shall say:
"Yes, a Warner came to us,
but we rejected him, saying:
'God hasn't sent down anything.
You're in deep delusion!'"
10. Then they shall say:
"Had we only listened and reflected,
we wouldn't have been here
among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!"
11. Thus they will confess their sins —
Get lost, you, the dwellers of the Fire!
12. But forgiveness and a great reward
are for those who secretly fear their Lord.

13. Whether you conceal your word or speak it out,
He surely knows what is in [your] hearts.
14. Would the One, Who has created
be ignorant of anything?
He is the Kindly, the Knowing.

15. He is the One, Who made the earth obey you.
So walk in its spaces and enjoy His provisions —
unto Him is [your] Resurrection!

16. Are you sure that the One, Who is in Heaven
will not make the earth swallow you as it shakes?
17. Are you sure that the One, Who is in Heaven
will not send upon you a hurricane
to remind you how [terrible] was My Warning!
18. But your predecessors had rejected it.
How [terrible] was My disapproval!

19. Don't they see the birds above them,
spreading and folding [their wings]?
Who supports them if not the Compassionate?
Verily, He sees everything!

20. What host would help you other than the Compassionate?
Verily, the disbelievers only delude themselves.
21* Who will give you sustenance
if He withholds His provisions?
But no, they persist in arrogance and denial!

22* Who is the best of those who follow the Guidance:
the one who walks with his face downcast,
or the one who walks evenly on the straight path?
23* Say:
"He's the One, Who has created you
and gave you hearing, sight, and a heart.
Yet, how small is your gratitude!"
24. Say:
"He's the One, Who multiplied you on earth
and to Him is your return!"
25. They say:
"When will this promise come true
if you're telling the truth?"
26. Say:
"Only God knows it — I'm just a clear Warner!"

27. When the disbelievers see [the promise] close by,
grieved shall be their faces.
They will be told:
— This is what you were asking for!
28* Say:
"Consider, if God destroyed me and my followers,
or if He had mercy upon us,
who would save the disbelievers from a painful punishment?"
29. Say:
"He, the Compassionate!
We've believed in Him and in Him we trust.
Soon you'll know who is in manifest error!"
30. Say:
"Consider, if one morning your water leaks down under,
who would bring you back a clear spring?"

V. 1: "Kingdom," the visible world (**moolk**).

V. 2: In the Koran death may be mentioned before life, evil before goodness, night before day... indeed, the contrasting things and ideas have been created simultaneously.

"He has created death." The Koran uses several words that convey the meaning of creation. Here, the word is **khalaqa**, applied to definite states such as death, or to inanimate objects such as the seven skies (v.3). For the creation of man, the word **ansha'a** is used. Its connotation is raising, making grow (v.23). The word **bana** indicates that something has been built according to a plan, as in "God has built the Heaven" (S.79:27).

V. 3: These are the seven physical skies. In S.67 the divine Name "the Compassionate" (Ar-rahman) occurs four times: such suras with multiple repetitions of the Name "the Compassionate" form the group of the "Ar-rahman suras."

V. 6: **Kafara** is to deny, and **kafir** is the one who hides the Truth, i.e., God's mercy and the Koranic teaching. To disbelieve is to deny Knowledge and Truth: indeed, high Knowledge is inconceivable without faith.

Unbelief **(kufr)** is not only rejection of God, but also blasphemy against Him. Atheists or materialists are often called **dahri** from **dahr** (time). According to the Koran, "we die and we live, and nothing but time (or unbelief) destroys us" (S.45:24).

V. 21: "Sustenance" or "subsistence" includes all that is necessary for the life of the body, the mind, and the soul.

V. 22: "Who walks with his face downcast," lit., "who walks falling on his face."

V. 23: The deep part of the heart **(fu'ad)** is the source of conscience, reason, and feelings (S.114:5).

V. 28: "Or if He had mercy upon us" — these words are out of context; they might be a late addition.

SURA 42 MUTUAL COUNSEL. ***This rather late sura is wholly addressed to the Prophet Muhammad. It enumerates the duties of a Muslim (Vv. 36-39) and discusses in a conciliatory tone the creeds based on revealed Scriptures. S.42 enjoins the Muslims to submit public affairs to collective discussion in line with modern ideas of government.***

42. MUTUAL COUNSEL
Meccan, 53 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim
2. 'ain sin qaf.
3. — [O Muhammad!] Like your predecessors,
you are inspired by God, the All-Mighty, the Wise.
4. Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to Him.
He is the Highest, the Greatest.

5. The Heavens are about to be ripped open above them;
the Angels proclaim the praise of their Lord
and ask forgiveness for those who are on the earth!
Verily, God is the Forgiving, the Merciful.
6. Those who take for themselves protectors besides Him
are being watched by God;
and their caretaker you are not!

7. We have inspired you with an Arabic Koran
to let you inform the Mother of Towns and its vicinity,
and warn of the Day of Assembly that cannot be doubted.
Then, some will be in Paradise and some in the blazing Fire.
8. Were it God's will, He would have made them one community,

but He takes into His grace only those He pleases.
The sinners shall have no protector or defender.
9. How can they take protectors besides Him
if the [only] Protector is God!
He revives the dead, and He has power over all things.
10. Whatever the disputes you are engaged in,
their resolution is with God.
Such is God, my Lord.
In Him I trust and to Him I turn.

11. He is the Creator of Heavens and earth.
He has made you in pairs and the cattle in pairs —
this is how He multiplies you!
No one is like Him — He is the Hearing, the Observing.

12. To Him belong the keys of the Heavens and earth.
He multiplies [His] provisions
or restricts them to whom He pleases.
Verily, He is well aware of everything.

13. He has established for you the religion
that He enjoined upon Noah. We inspired it to you
and willed it to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus:
— Hold firmly onto religion, do not allow any divisions!
Hard is for the Associators what you are calling them to.
God chooses for Himself those He pleases
and leads to Himself those who turn [to Him].

14* After receiving Knowledge, they split out of mutual hatred.
Had it not been for your Lord's Word about a fixed term,
everything would have been settled between them.
Verily, the heirs to the Scripture
have strong doubts about it.
15* — Therefore, [o Muhammad!], appeal to them
and be firm as commanded.
Do not follow their passions, but say:
"I believe in the Scripture that God has sent down to me,
and I'm ordered to judge between you in justice.
God is our Lord and your Lord.
Our deeds are ours, and your deeds are yours,
and there's no quarrel between us.
God will bring us together — to Him is [our] destination!"

16. The arguments of those who argue about God
after they have accepted Him
are insignificant in the sight of their Lord.
[His] wrath and a severe punishment will fall upon them.

17. God is the One, Who has sent
the true Scripture and the Balance.
How can you know? — Perhaps the Hour is near.
18. Only those who do not believe in [the Hour]
want to hasten it, and those who believe in it

are in awe of it because they know that it is true.
Verily, only those who are in deep error
argue about the Hour.

19. God is kindly to His servants —
He provides for any one He pleases.
He is the Strong, the All-Mighty.
20. We will increase the harvest
to him who desires a harvest in the Hereafter,
and to him who desires a harvest in this world,
We will give a part of it,
but he shall have no share in the Hereafter.

21. Is it possible that they have "partners" who established
for them some religion not sanctioned by God?
Had it not been for the Word about the Judgment,
everything would have already been decided between them.
Verily, the wrong-doers shall get a painful punishment.
22. You will see how the wrong-doers
shall be scared by their deeds
when [these deeds] turn against them.

But those who have believed and have done good works
shall find themselves in meadows among Gardens,
where they shall get everything they want from their Lord:
it shall be a mighty grace for them.
23* God will announce it to those of His servants
who have believed and have done good works.
Say:
"I'm not asking you a fee,
only that you love your kindred."
To any one who does good, We will add more goodness.
Verily, God is forgiving and thankful!
24. They say:
"He's invented a lie against God!"
But if He willed, God would have sealed your heart.
By His Words God erases falsehood and sustains the Truth.
Verily, He is well aware of what is in the hearts!

25. He is the One, Who accepts the repentance of His servants
and pardons transgressions; He knows all what you do.
26. He responds to those who believed and did good works,
and He adds to them out of His bounty.
There is a severe punishment for the disbelievers!

27. Had God opened to His servants a wide access to His bounty,
they would have rioted on the earth.
So He sends it in due measure according to His will.
Verily, He is cognizant and observant of His servants!
28. He is the One, Who spreads His bounty around
and sends the rain when there is no more hope for it.
He is the Protector, the Praiseworthy.

29* Among His Signs is the creation of Heavens and earth,
and of the animals He has scattered everywhere.
It is in His power to bring them together if He wills.

30. Whatever misfortune befalls you,
it is of your own doing, but He pardons a lot!
31. You cannot avoid anything on the earth,
and you have no protector nor helper besides God.

32. Among His Signs are the ships on the sea like mountains.
33. If He wills, the wind dies,
and they stop on the crest [of a wave].
Verily, there are Signs in this
for any one who is patient and grateful.
34. He could have destroyed them for what they had done,
but there is much He forgives.
35. Let those who argue about Our Signs know
that they have no way to escape!

36. Whatever you acquire is but a convenience of this life.
But what is with God is better and more lasting
for those who believed and put their trust in their Lord,
37. who avoided great sins and indecencies
and forgave when in anger,
38. who responded to their Lord and practiced the prayer,
who [managed] their affairs by mutual counsel,
who contributed from what We had provided them with,
39* and stood for themselves when treated unjustly.

40* The retribution for evil is a comparable evil,
but for him who forgives and makes peace,
there shall be a reward from God.
Verily, God does not love the unjust.

41. There is no blame upon those who resist persecution,
42. but there is a blame upon those who persecute the people
and transgress lawlessly in the land.
There will be a painful punishment for them!
43. And any one who is patient and forgiving
is, verily, steadfast in his affairs.

44. The one God sends astray will have no Protector!
You shall see that at the sight of the punishment
the wrong-doers will say:
"Is there a way to return?"
45. And when they are rounded up, you will see them
subdued in disgrace, casting furtive glances around.
Then the believers will say:
"Those who have hurt themselves and their families,
verily, will sustain a loss on Judgment Day.
Verily, the wrong-doers will get a lasting punishment!"

46. They have no protectors besides God to help them,

and there is no escape for those whom God let go astray.
47. So respond to your Lord before the Day arrives
that cannot be postponed.
On that Day you shall have no shelter and no excuse.

48. — [O Muhammad!] They might turn away,
but We have not sent you to guard them,
but to transmit [the Koran]!
When We allow a man to have a taste of Our mercy,
he rejoices, but when evil befalls him
because of what his hands have sent forth...
Verily, man is so ungrateful!

49. To God belongs the Realm of the Heavens and earth.
He creates what He wills.
He gives daughters to whom He wills
and sons to whom He wills.
50. He joins males and females, and leaves barren whom He wills.
Verily, He is knowledgeable and powerful!

51. God had spoken to man only by inspiration or through a veil,
or through a Messenger to let him convey
with His permission whatever He desired.
Verily, He is lofty and wise!

52* — [O Muhammad!] We have inspired you
with the Spirit of Our Design.
Indeed, you did not know before the Scripture or the faith.
[And now] We made [the Koran] a Light
by which We guide those of Our servants whom We will.

Verily, you do guide them to the straight path,
53. to the path of God,
Who owns everything in Heavens and earth.
Yes, all affairs do return to God!

V. 14: This has already been said in S.45:17.

V. 15 Note the conciliatory tone of the Prophet's words.

V. 23: "The kindred" are family, neighbors, clan members or even "the others." Muslims address one another as "brothers."

V. 29: Life is "everywhere," perhaps not only on our planet.

V. 39: Cowardice impeded the raising of a reliable army.

V. 40: For "evil" or for "injury."

V. 52: The idolaters had no faith and no Scripture.

Sura 35 The Angels. ***S.35, known under the names "The Angels" or "The Originator," is a typical doxological sura.***

35. THE ANGELS
Meccan, 45 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Praised be God, the Originator of Heavens and earth,
Who made the Angels — the Envoys
with two, three, or four pairs of wings.
He adds to His Creation as He wills.
Verily, God has power over all things!

2. Nobody can withhold what God gives to man of His mercy,
but what He does withhold, nobody can deliver, except Him.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

3* O people! Remember God's goodness to you!
Is there any other creator besides God,
who provides your sustenance from heaven and earth?
There is no God, but Him, so why are you so deluded?

4. — [O Muhammad!] If they reject you,
other Messengers had been rejected before.
But all affairs return to God!

5. O people! God's promise is true.
Do not let this life seduce you
and do not let the Seducer seduce you against God.
6. Verily, Satan is your foe,
so treat him like a foe.
He invites his followers to his side
to turn them into inmates of the blazing Fire.

7. There is a severe punishment for the disbelievers,
but for those who believed and did good works
there is forgiveness and a great reward.

8. Those, whose evil conduct has been embellished,
think that it was sound!
God lets any one He wills go astray,
and He guides any one He wills.
Do not allow your soul to grieve for them —
verily, God knows all what they do.

9. It is God Who sends forth
the winds that stir up the clouds.
We drive them to a lifeless land
to revive its parched soil.
And such shall be the Resurrection!

10. Everyone seeks honor, but all Honor belongs to God.

Good words ascend to Him, and He extols the good deeds.
But there is a severe punishment for those who plot evil.
Their plotting will be to no avail!

11. God has created you from dust,
then from a seed, then He made you in pairs.
No female can conceive or deliver without His knowledge.
Days are extended for an old man, and life is cut short
only by decision from Above — verily, it is easy for God!

12* The two seas are not alike:
one is tasty, fresh, and pleasant to drink;
the other is salty and bitter.
But you eat fresh fish from both
and get the adornments you wear.
You behold the ships that plough [the waves],
allowing you to search for His bounty —
perhaps you will be grateful!

13. [God] merges the night with the day,
and He merges the day with the night.
He has subjugated the sun and the moon
to make each run its course in a given time.
Such is God, your Lord! To Him belongs the Kingdom!

But those you call upon besides Him do not own anything,
not even the skin of a date's pit.
14* Try to call them, but they will not hear your call,
and if they heard you, they would not respond.
On Resurrection Day they will deny
your associating them [with God].
Nobody will enlighten you as well as the All-Knowing!

15. O people! You need God —
God is the Rich, the Praiseworthy.
16. If He wills, He can remove you and start a new Creation.
17. Easy it is for God!

18* No one carrying a burden
will carry someone else's burden.
If someone is overburdened and calls [for help],
nobody, even his close relative,
will carry the smallest part of it.

You can warn only those who fear their Lord in secret
and observe the prayer. Whoever purifies himself,
purifies himself to his soul's advantage.
To God is [your] return!

19. The blind and the seeing are not alike
20. nor darkness and light,
21. nor shade and burning heat,
22. nor the living and the dead.

God gives hearing to whom He wills,
but you cannot compel to hear those who are in the graves!

23. You are only a Warner.
24. Verily, We have sent you
as a Carrier of good news and a Warner.
There has never been a nation
without a Warner from its midst.
25. If they reject you, so the people of old had rejected
the Messengers who came to them with clear Proofs,
prophetic writings, and an enlightening Scripture.
26. I seized the disbelievers,
and [stern] was My condemnation!

27. Do you not see how God sends water from the sky,
and how We grow with it fruits of different colors.
And in the mountains there are white and red streaks
of different hues, and some striking black.
28. Among men, beasts, and cattle some are of different hues.
But only those of His servants
who are endowed with Knowledge fear God.
Verily, God is omnipotent and all-forgiving!

29. Verily, those who recite the Scripture of God,
observe the prayer, and contribute secretly or openly
from what We have granted them, hope for a sure profit.
30. [God] will give them a full reward
and will add to them more of His bounty.
Verily, He is forgiving and appreciative!

31. — [O Muhammad!] What We have inspired to you
of the Scripture is the Truth.
It confirms what has been revealed before.
Verily, God knows His servants and observes them!

32. We have willed the Scripture to the servants We chose.
Some do wrong to themselves, others act in moderation,
and some, with God's permission, lead in good works.
This is a mighty Grace!
33. They shall enter the Gardens of Eden
where they shall be bedecked with bracelets
of gold and pearls and clad in garments of silk.
34. They shall say:
"Praised be God, Who has freed us from grief.
Verily, our Lord is forgiving and appreciative!
35. By His Grace He gave us a permanent abode
where we'll not be touched by heavy toil,
where we'll not be touched by exhaustion."

36. And for the disbelievers —
Hellfire that will never end.
They shall not be allowed to die therein,
and their punishment shall not be reduced.

Such is Our reward for the ungrateful ones!
37. They shall cry from there:
"Our Lord! Let us get out!
We'll replace by good works what we've done before!"
— Have We not made your life long enough
to allow you to recall the Reminder?
Has not a Warner come to you?
Then, taste it!
Nobody will help those who do wrong!

38. God knows the Unseen in Heavens and earth.
Verily, He knows what is in the hearts!
39. He is the One, Who has made you inherit the earth.
If anyone denies, his denial will turn against him.
The disbelievers' denial
will only increase their Lord's revulsion.
The disbelievers' denial
will only increase their loss!
40. Say:
"Have you seen your partners
whom you call to besides God?
Show me what they have created on earth
and what is their part in Heavens!"
Have We not given them a Scripture with the Evidence?
But no! The evildoers promise one another
nothing but delusions!

41. Is it not God, Who supports the Heavens and earth
to keep them from caving in?
And if they started collapsing,
nobody would support them besides Him.
Verily, He is full of love and forgiveness!

42. They have sworn by the most solemn oath — by God,
that if a Warner came to them,
they would accept his Guidance better than any nation.
Yet, the coming of a Warner only increased their hostility.
43* Pretending to be great in the land, they plotted evil.
But evil plots shall turn against the plotters.
They have nothing to expect,
but the fate of the first [nations].
You will find no changes in God's way,
you will find no substitutions in God's way!

44. Have they not traveled in the land and seen
what was the end of their predecessors
who were mightier than they are?
Nothing can frustrate God in Heavens or on earth.
Verily, He is all-knowing and powerful!

45* Had God wanted to punish men for their deeds,
He would not have left any creature alive
on the surface [of the earth],

but He respites them till a stated time,
and when time is up…
Verily, God has all His servants in His sight!

V. 1: Originator **(fatir)** is still another word for "Creator" with the connotation of initiator or masterminder. The wings of the Angels symbolize their spiritual attributes.

V. 3: "Sustenance" — in the physical and spiritual sense.

V. 12: "The two seas are not alike," meaning potable water and salty water. "Fresh fish," lit., "fresh meat." The "adornments" from the sea are pearls, corals, and nacre.

V. 14: "Nobody will enlighten" — about deeds or the Truth.

V. 18: "His close relative," as in S.42:23. Everyone is responsible for one's own deeds (cf. S.13:11).

V. 39: "You inherit the earth" — you will be "the inheritors" of God or God's representatives on earth.

V. 43: "You will never find any changes in the way of God." If God is perfect, He is immutable, and if He is almighty, He must be able to change His Creation — that is beyond man's understanding.

V. 45: Life in this world would be meaningless without man. People of all faiths believe that man was created in the image of God in order to complete His Design.

SURA 29 THE SPIDER. ***S.29 is another run-down on Abraham, Lot, and other Prophets. This sura mentions the Hypocrites (S.2:10) — a faction of "fellow travelers" quick to betray Islam when asked to fight.***

29. THE SPIDER
Meccan, 69 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Alef lam mim
2. Do people really think that if they say:
   "We have believed,"
   they will be left alone and will not be tried?
3. Yet, We have tried their predecessors!
   God surely knows who is telling the truth,
   and He knows who is lying.
4. Do the evil doers think they can elude Us?
   How bad is their judgment!
5. As for the ones who hope to meet God,
   verily, God's term is sure to come.
   He is the Hearer, the Knowing.

6. Anyone who strives, strives for himself.
   Verily, God has no need for the Worlds!
7. We will surely cancel the evil deeds of those
   who believed and did good works, and We will reward them
   according to the best of their deeds.

8. We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents.
But do not obey them
if they try to make you associate with Me
something you have no knowledge about.
You shall all return to Me,
and I will announce to you what you have done.
9. Those who believed and did good works,
We will make them join the upright.
10* Some people say:
"We believe in God."
But as soon as they suffer in the way of God,
they mistake men's persecutions for God's punishment.
If your Lord helped them, they would surely say:
"We were with you!"
Does not God know best what is in people's hearts?
11. God surely knows who is a believer
and He surely knows who is a Hypocrite.

12. The disbelievers say to the believers:
"Follow our way, and we'll take your sins upon us!"
They will not take your sins upon themselves —
indeed, they are such liars!
13. They shall bear their burden and,
in addition, the burden [of others];
and on Resurrection Day
they shall be asked about their fabrications.

14. We sent Noah to his people.
He lived among them a thousand years, but fifty.
The flood overtook them while they were sinning,
15. But We saved him and his companions on the ark,
of which We made a Sign for the Worlds.

16. Abraham said to his people:
"Worship God and fear Him.
That's better for you, if you [only] knew!
17. But you worship [idols] besides God and fabricate lies.
Those you worship besides God cannot feed you.
Therefore, seek provisions from God, worship Him,
and be grateful to Him —
indeed, to Him is your return!
18. If you refuse, so did the people before you.
The Messenger's duty is only a clear delivery."

19. Do they not see how God starts the Creation
and then repeats it? Verily, this is easy for God!
20* Say:
"Travel in the land and see
how God has started the Creation.
Finally, God will produce the last Creation.
Verily, God has power over all things.

21. He punishes whom He wills and pardons whom He wills.

To Him is your return!
22. You cannot escape on earth or in Heaven,
and you have no protector and no helper besides God."
23. Only those who despair of My mercy
deny the Signs of God and the meeting with Him —
they will get a painful punishment.

24. [And Abraham?] His people had only one response:
"Kill or burn him!"
But God saved him from the fire.
Verily, there are Signs in this
for the people who believe.

25. [Abraham] said:
"You've taken for yourselves some idols besides God
because of your mutual affection in this life,
but on Resurrection Day you'll disown and curse one another.
Your abode shall be the Fire,
and you'll find no one to help you."

26. Lot believed in Him. He said:
"I'll resettle to my Lord,
verily, He's the Mighty, the Wise."

27* [To Abraham] We gave Isaac and Jacob,
and We established the prophetic mission
and the Scripture among his posterity.
We rewarded him in this life,
and in the Hereafter he will be among the upright.

28. Lot said to his people:
"Indeed, you commit indecency,
unsurpassed by no one in the Worlds.
29. Is it not true that you come at men,
cut them off on their way,
and commit shameful acts at your gatherings?"
But his people had just one answer:
"Bring God's wrath upon us if you're telling the truth!"
30. [Lot] said: "O my Lord!
Help me against the corrupt people!"

31. When Our Envoys brought the news to Abraham,
they said:
"We'll destroy the people of this town.
Verily, its dwellers are transgressors!"
32. [Abraham] said:
"But Lot is among them!"
They said:
"We know better who's among them.
We'll save him and his family,
but not his wife who shall be left behind!"
33. When Our Envoys came to Lot, he felt sorry for them,
but he had no power to help them.

They said:
"Don't be afraid and don't grieve!
We'll save you and your family,
except your wife who shall be left behind.
34. We shall send upon the people of this town
a punishment from Heaven for their depravation."
35* And We left a clear Sign about it for people who think.

36. To [the people of] Madyan [We sent] their brother Shu'aib.
He said:
"O my people! Worship God, fear the Last Day,
don't sin and don't spread corruption in the land."
37. But they rejected him. Then an earthquake overtook them,
and the next morning they were lying prone in their houses.

38. And [the peoples of] 'Ad and Thamood!...
Everything will become clear to you
when you see [the ruins] of their houses.
Satan made their works look fair to them
and diverted them from the [right] path.
And yet they had been enlightened!

39. And Korah, and Pharaoh, and Haman!...
Moses came to them with the Proofs.
Even though they made much of themselves in the land,
they were unable to forestall Us.
40. We seized them all for their sins:
upon some of them We sent a sandstorm,
some were hit by a thunderbolt or swallowed by the earth,
and some others We drowned. God was not unjust to them —
they had been unjust to themselves.

41. Whoever takes protectors besides God
is like the spider who spins his web.
But a house made of spider's web
is the shoddiest of houses — if they [only] knew!
42. Verily, God knows what they call on besides Him.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.
43. Such are the examples We bring to people,
but only those who have Knowledge understand them.
44. God has truly created the Heavens and the earth
and, verily, there is a Sign in this for those who believe.

45. Recite what has been inspired to you of the Scripture
and observe the prayer: verily, prayer protects
from indecent and disreputable acts.
And most important is the remembrance of God —
indeed, God knows all what you do.

46. When you dispute with the People of the Scripture
(but not with those who persecute you),
do it in good faith and say:
"We believe in what has been sent down to us

and in what has been sent down to you!
Our God and your God is One, and we surrender to Him!"

47* We have sent down to you the Scripture
in which the People of the Scripture believe,
as well as some others.
Only the disbelievers reject Our Signs.

48. — [O Muhammad!] You have not read any Scripture before,
and you have not copied [it] with your right hand,
otherwise the liars would have surely doubted.
49. These Verses are clear Proofs
in the hearts of those who have Knowledge.
Only the sinners reject Our Verses!
50. They say:
"Why doesn't his Lord send down some Verses to him?"
Say:
"All Verses are with God and I'm a only a clear Warner."
51. We have sent down to you the Scripture
that is recited to them. Is that not enough?
Verily, therein is mercy and a Reminder for the believers.
52. Say:
"Sufficient is God as a Witness between us.
He knows what is in Heavens and on earth.
And those who believed in lies and denied God
shall be the losers."

53. — [O Muhammad!] They hasten you with the punishment,
but had they not been respited,
the punishment would have already befallen them.
It shall come upon them so suddenly
that they will be caught unawares.
54. So let them not hasten you with the punishment!
Verily, Hell will encircle the disbelievers.
55. And on the Day when the punishment encircles them
from above and below, they will be told:
— Have a taste of what you have done!

56. — O My believing servants!
Verily, wide is My Land, so worship Me!
57. Every soul shall taste death,
then you shall all be returned to Us!
58. Those who believed and have done well,
We will settle them in Paradise in mansions
under which the rivers flow, to remain there for ever.
What an excellent reward for those who toiled,
59. were patient, and trusted their Lord!
60. How many living creatures cannot provide for themselves,
but God feeds them and you.
He is the Listener, the Knowing.

61. If you ask them who has created the Heavens and earth
and subjugated the sun and the moon,

they will certainly say:
"God!"
Then, how come they yield to deception?
62. God increases or lessens [His] provisions
to those of His servants He wills.
Verily, God is well informed of everything!
63* If you ask them, Who sends down water from the sky
and uses it to revive the soil after it has died,
they will certainly say:
"God!"
Say:
"Praised be God!"
But most of them do not understand.
64. Is not life in this world mere amusement and play?
Verily, real life is only in the abode of the Hereafter,
if they [only] knew!

65. When they board a ship, they call on God with a pure heart.
But as soon as He brings them ashore,
they associate partners to Him,
66. reject Our gifts, and go after distractions.
But soon they shall know!
67. Do they not see that We have given them
a secure Sacred Place,
while people are being expelled in its vicinity?
Why do they believe in lies and deny the goodness of God?

68. Who is more unjust than the one
who invents lies against God
and rejects the Truth that has come to him?
Will there not be enough space in Hell
for all the disbelievers?
69. But those who have toiled in Our cause,
We will surely guide them in Our way.
Verily, God is with those who do right.

V. 10: "The Hypocrites" are those who adhere to Islam only for profit and refuse to fight in the cause of God (cf. S.63).

Vv. 20-22: The injunction "Say" is addressed to Abraham.

V. 27: This verse should logically follow v. 25.

V. 35: The "clear Sign" — here it is the Dead Sea.

V. 47: "Some others" are probably former pagans.

V. 63: Some Hypocrites believe in God, but they do not try to improve themselves and to lead a righteous life.

SURA 41 MADE CLEAR. ***A Warning/Sign/Say sura in the defense of the Koran, directed to Muhammad. 'Ad and Thamood are mentioned briefly (vv. 13-18).***

41. MADE CLEAR
Meccan, 54 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Ha mim.
2. [This is] a Revelation from the Compassionate, the Merciful,
3. a Scripture with Verses made clear,
an Arabic Koran for the people who understand.
4. It contains good tidings and warnings,
yet most of them turn away and do not listen.
5. They say:
"Our hearts are veiled from what you're calling us to.
Our ears are deaf, between us is a curtain.
Do [as you want], and we'll do [as we want]!"
6. Say:
"I'am a man like you.
I've been inspired that your God is One God.
So stand before Him and ask for His forgiveness!"
Woe to the Associators —
7. to those who withhold the zakat and deny the Hereafter!
8. But there is a sure reward
for those who believed and did good works.
9* Say:
"You're denying the One, Who created the earth in two days,
and you associate equals to Him!"
He is the Lord of the Worlds.
10. He has set firmly standing mountains.
He has blessed [the earth], and in four days
He has distributed provisions upon it,
equitably for all the seekers.
11. Then He turned to the sky, which was then [like] smoke,
and said to it and to the earth:
— Come willingly or unwillingly!
They said:
"We're coming willingly!"

12. He has installed seven skies in two days
and gave a function to each sky.
We adorned the lower sky with lights
and provided [it] with guard.
Such was the Decree of the Mighty, the All-Knowing.

13. If they turn away, say:
"I'm warning you about a thunderbolt
like the one [which struck] 'Ad and Thamood!"
14* Messengers came to them from all sides:
"Don't worship anyone, but God alone!"
But they said:

"Had Our Lord so willed,
He would have rather sent Angels.
We reject what you've been sent with!"

15. Making much of themselves in the land
and defying the Truth, [the people of] 'Ad said:
"Is there anyone stronger than us?"
Did they not see that the strongest is God, their Creator?
But they continued to reject Our Signs
until came the days of their demise.
16. We sent upon them a howling wind to make them taste
a shameful punishment in this life.
But still more shameful is the punishment in the Hereafter
when they will have no assistance.

17. We gave Guidance to [the people of] Thamood,
but they chose to stay blind. A humiliating punishment
struck them like a thunderbolt for all they had done.
18. But We saved those who believed and feared God.

19. On that Day the enemies of God
shall be rounded up before the Fire and sorted out.
20* And when they reach it, their hearing, sight, and skins
will bear witness against them in their deeds.
21. They shall say to their skins:
"Why are you witnessing against us?"
They shall say:
"God, Who gave speech to all things, gave speech to us.
He created you in the first Creation
and to Him you shall return.
22. Wherever you hide, your hearing, sight, and skins
shall bear witness against you.
You shouldn't have thought
that God is unaware of many of your deeds.
23. Your thoughts have caused your destruction
because of what you imagined about your Lord,
and now you're among the losers."

24. Even if they endure, they shall abide in the Fire.
And if they ask for mercy,
they shall not be of those who receive mercy.

25* We have assigned to them companions
to make their past and their future appealing to them.
The sentence passed against the former generations
of Jinn and men shall be passed against them.
They shall all turn out to be losers.

26. The disbelievers say:
"Don't listen to this Koran!
Keep prattling while it's recited — perhaps you'll prevail!"
27. Surely, We will make the disbelievers taste
a severe punishment, and We will reward them

for the worst of their deeds.
28. The reward of God's enemies shall be the Fire
in which they shall abide for ever
in retaliation for denying Our Signs.
29. The disbelievers will say:
"O our Lord!
Show us the Jinn and men who have deceived us.
We'll trample them under our feet to better humiliate them."
30. Verily, those who say:
"Our Lord is God,"
and keep on holding firmly to it, the Angels alight on them:
"Don't fear and don't grieve,
but rejoice at the news of the promised Paradise.
31. We're your friends in this life and the Hereafter,
where you'll be fulfilled to your soul's desire,
getting all you ask for.
32. That is a gift from the forgiving and merciful!"
33. Who speaks better words than the one who calls to God,
does good works, and says:
"I'm of those who submitted themselves to God!"

34. Good and evil are not equal.
Drive out [evil] with what is better,
then your enemy will become your close friend.
35. But this is not for everyone, only for those who endure,
for the luckiest ones.
36. And if Satan incites you to discord, take refuge with God.
Verily, He is the Hearer, the All-Knowing.

37. Among His Signs are night and day, the sun and the moon.
Do not worship the sun or the moon,
but worship God, their Creator,
if it is Him that you want to serve.
38. While some make much of themselves,
others, the ones who are on your Lord's side,
tirelessly glorify Him night and day.

39. Among His Signs you see a barren soil that swells
and revives as soon as We send down some water upon it,
Verily, the One, Who revives it can surely revive the dead.
Verily, He has power over everything!

40. Those who corrupt Our Signs cannot hide from Us.
Who will be better off: the one cast into the Fire,
or the one safely surviving Judgment Day?
Do whatever you want, but He sees everything you do.
41. Verily, those who denied the Reminder
when it came to them...
Verily, great is this Scripture!
42* It is a Revelation from the wise and praiseworthy.
Lies cannot approach it from any side!
43. Everything you are told
has been told to Messengers before you.

Verily, your Lord wields forgiveness,
and He wields a painful retribution!

44. Had We made the Koran in a foreign tongue,
they would have said:
"Why aren't its Verses made clear
and why an Arab does not speak Arabic?"
Say:
"This is a Guidance and a healing for the believers,
As for the disbelievers,
their ears are deaf and [their eyes] are blind,
as if they're being called from far away!"

45* When We gave the Scripture to Moses,
conflicts arose about it.
Had it not been for a previous Word of your Lord,
the matter between them would have already been settled,
but they have serious doubts about it.
46. It benefits the soul to do right,
and it hurts her to do evil.
Your Lord will never be unjust to [His] servants.

47. He is the One, Who knows about the Hour.
No fruit would issue from an ovary without Him knowing it,
and not a single female would become pregnant or deliver!
On that Day He will ask:
— Where are My "partners"?
They shall say:
"No one of us can vouch for that!"
48. Whatever they worshiped shall abandon them,
and they will realize that they cannot escape.

49. Man prays tirelessly for goodness,
but as soon as evil touches him, he succumbs to despair.
50. If We gave him a taste of Our mercy
after he had been touched by hardship,
he would surely say:
"I deserved that and I'm sure that the Hour will never come.
If I'm returned to my Lord,
surely I would receive [much] goodness from Him."
Yes, We will certainly show their deeds to the disbelievers,
and We will make them taste a severe punishment!

51. When We bestow a favor upon a man,
he turns his back and goes away,
but when evil touches him, he resorts to lengthy prayers.
52. Say:
"If you see that [the Koran] is from God,
then why do you reject it?
Who is more in error than someone in deep discord?"
53. Soon We will display Our Signs
to the whole world and to themselves,
and then it will become clear to them

that [the Koran] is the Truth.
Is it not enough that your Lord is witness to all things?

54. Then, why do they have doubts
about the meeting with their Lord?
Verily, He is the One, Who encompasses all things!

Vv. 9f: The Days of creation seem to total eight, or six if we include the two days of v.9 in the four days of v.10. Our arithmetic is not applicable to the Unseen. According to vv. 9-11 the earth was created before the sky and according to S.79: 27-30 the sky was created before the earth — again, the Unseen does not depend on our logic and on the physical sequence of events.

V. 14: "From every side," lit.: "from the front and from the back" or "in the past and in the future."

V. 20: "Their skins," i.e., their sensory organs.

V. 25: The "companions" are the **Qarinas** and **Qarins** (S.50:23; S.7:202). The idea of a female element in the male, and vice-versa, i.e., of bisexuality is expressed in hermaphroditic representation of the ***anima*** in man and the ***animus*** in women in Medieval art. Both "abnormal halves" are the sources of psychological deviations that find explanations in modern genetics and endocrinology.

V. 42: "From any side," lit: "from the front and back".

V. 45: "The Word" — the reprieve given by God to the sinners.

VI. Legal Matters

Sura 49 The Chambers. ***This late well-constructed sura teaches how to behave in the presence of the Prophet (vv. 1-5), towards each other (vv. 6-13), and towards the people who have joined Islam out of personal interest (vv. 14-17). The nomadic Arabs, also known as "Bedouins" are introduced in v.14.***

49. THE CHAMBERS
Medinan, 18 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* O you who have believed!
Do not show off before God and His Messenger,
but fear God.
Verily, God is hearing and all-knowing!

2. O you who have believed!
Do not raise your voices above the Prophet's voice
and do not speak with him
as loudly as you speak among yourselves,
lest your actions fail without your perceiving it.
3. Those whose hearts God has tested for devotion
lower their voices in the presence of the Prophet of God.
For them there is forgiveness and a great reward.

4* — [O Muhammad!] Most of those who call you
from the outer chambers do not know
that it is better for them to wait
until you came out to them.
God is forgiving and merciful!

6. O you who have believed!
If a reprobate brings you some news, check it,

lest you unwillingly hurt other people
and then regret your action.

7. Know that the Messenger of God is with you
and that you could be hurt
if he complied with your whims.

God made you cherish faith
and made it beautiful in your hearts.
He made you hate disbelief, depravity,
and dissent. Such are the righteous
8. by God's Grace and His mercy.
God is all-knowing and wise!

9* If two factions of believers fight each other,
make peace between them.
If one of them is unjust to the other,
then fight against the unjust one,
until it accepts God's will.
And when it does, make peace between them
according to the law, and be fair.
Verily, God loves those who are fair.
10* The believers are brothers,
so make peace among your brothers and fear God —
perhaps you will receive mercy!

11* O you who have believed!
Do not allow some people to mock other people
(indeed, the latter might be better than the former),
and some women [to mock] other women
who might be better than they are.
Do not berate one another
or call one another by nicknames.
It is unseemly to label dissolute
anyone who has become a believer.
And those who persist are doing wrong.

12* O you who have believed!
Carefully avoid suspicion, for suspicion could be a sin!
Do not spy on one another
nor berate [others] behind their backs.
Would you eat the flesh of your dead brother?
Of course not! You would find that disgusting.
So fear God — verily, God is relenting and merciful!

13* O people! We have created you from a male and a female,
and We have arranged you into nations and tribes
to let you interact among yourselves.
Verily, the noblest amongst you before God
is the one who is the most God-fearing.
Verily, God is all-knowing and well-informed!

14* The Arab nomads say:

"We believe!"
Say:
"You don't believe, because you say:
'We've submitted yourselves'
before belief has entered your hearts.
If you obey God and His Messenger,
then [God] will not belittle your deeds a bit —
verily, God is forgiving and merciful!"

15. The believers are those who believed
in God and His Messenger.
They did not succumb to doubts,
but contributed of their property
and their person to the cause of God:
they are the sincere ones.
16. Say:
"How will you teach your religion to God
if God knows everything in Heavens and earth?
God is aware of all things!"

17. [The nomads] think that they are doing you a favor
by becoming Muslims.
Say:
"Don't think that you do me a favor by embracing Islam.
It's God Who did you a favor by guiding you to belief,
if you're really sincere!"

18. Verily, God knows the secrets of Heavens and earth.
God sees everything you do!

V. 1: Another translation: "Abstain from making suggestions to God and His Messenger" (cf. v.16).

V. 9: "Fight each other" or "argue with each other."

V. 10: Some of the extremist and fanatical Muslim factions that continue to trouble Islam to this day by their intolerance and terrorism in certain countries call themselves "Muslim Brotherhoods." They have no understanding of the respect and moderation taught in the Koran. They pretend to fight for religious and moral principles, while the West is presumably fighting for petroleum and other economic interests.

V. 11: "Nicknames" or demeaning names.

V. 12: "Suspicion" or vain curiosity.

V. 13: "Interact" — lit., recognize one another.

Vv. 14f: One cannot be a Muslim without real faith and virtue (**ihsan**), i.e., a without a "purified" religion. The "Bedouins" are Arab nomads, freedom-loving tribes of various persuasions. Those of them who adopted Islam halfheartedly were often unreliable and unfit for an organized fight against their opponents.

SURA 5 THE TABLE SET. ***S.5 is named after the Meal or the Table that the disciples of Jesus challenged their master to bring down from Heaven (v.114).***

A mosaic of prescriptions and pronouncements, this sura is probably one of the latest in the Koran because it says in v.3: "Today, I have brought your religion to perfection!" Attaining perfection brings any task to completion.

S.5 clarifies the relationship between the Muslims and the "People of the Scripture," i.e, the Christians, the Jews, and the "Sabi'un" (Zoroastrians?). The tone of the sura is conciliatory, especially towards the Christians. It is anticipated that the Jews and the Christians will continue bickering within their groups till the end of the world, while the Muslims will form a united front.

The sura contains so many prescriptions that only the most important of them are listed here:

1) about food (vv. 1, 3-5, 87-88, 93), wine (vv. 90-91), hunting (vv. 1-2, 94-96), and gambling (vv. 90-91).

2) about prayer (vv. 6, 12, 55), ritual ablutions (v.6), making contributions (vv. 12, 55), pilgrimage (vv. 1-2, 95, 97), animal offerings (vv. 2, 97, 103-104), asking questions about religion (v.101), and defecting from Islam (v.54).

3) about justice (vv. 7-8), making oaths (v.79), murdering without provocation (v.32), stealing (vv. 38-39), retaliation (v. 45), and treatment of enemies (vv. 33-34).

4) about marriage (v.5) and making bequests (vv. 106-108).

5) about the attitude of the Muslims toward the Jews (vv. 13, 40-45, 64, 70-71, 78-81), the Christians (vv. 14, 17, 46-47, 72- 77, 82-85, 110-118), and the People of the Scripture in general (vv.15, 18-19, 33-34, 48-53, 57-63, 65-69).

5. THE TABLE SET
Meccan, 120 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* O you who have believed,
fulfill your obligations!

You are allowed [to eat] four-legged animals,
except the ones mentioned elsewhere;
but hunting during pilgrimage is proscribed.
Verily, God decrees what He wills.
O you who have believed!
Do not violate the sanctity of God's rituals,
the sacred month, the animal offerings,

2. their ornaments, and [the rights]
of those who flock to the Sacred House
in the pursuit of their Lord's bounty and goodwill.
You may hunt when you are allowed to.

Do not let your hatred for the people
who kept you away from the Sacred Mosque
incite you to hostility.
Assist one another in goodness and devotion,
but do not assist in corruption and enmity.
Fear God, for verily,
God is harsh in punishment!

3. Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, pork,
and what has been slaughtered
with the invocation of anyone other than God.
[And also] what has been strangled, bludgeoned,
killed in a fall, gored, or mangled by wild beasts,
unless you have slaughtered it [as prescribed].

[Forbidden] is also what has been sacrificed on altars
or apportioned with arrows — that is sinful for you.

Today, the disbelievers have lost all hope in your religion.
Do not fear them, but fear Me!
Today, I have brought your religion to perfection.
I fulfilled My goodness toward you
and approved Islam as your religion.
But if hunger forces you to sin without premeditation,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

4* They are asking you what they are allowed to eat.
Say:
"You're allowed wholesome food
and what is caught for you by the hunting animals
that you have trained, as God instructed you.
Eat what they catch for you,
but mention the name of God and fear God.
Verily, God is quick at reckoning!"

5. Today, you are allowed to eat wholesome food.
You are allowed the food of the people of the Scripture,
and your food is allowed to them.

[Permitted] to you are chaste women
from among the believers and chaste women
from among those who received a Scripture before you.
Give them a compensation,
seek in them decency and not lewdness,
and do not make of them your secret mistresses.
Worthless is the toil of him who denies faith:
in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers.

6* O you who have believed!
Before you stand up for praying,
wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows,
wipe your heads and feet down to your ankles,
and purify yourselves if you are polluted.
If you are sick or on a journey,
or if you come out from a privy,
or if you have touched women and have no water,
then wash yourselves with clean soil,
wiping with it your faces and hands.
God does not wish to burden you with hardship,
but only to purify you

and to complete His goodness to you —
perhaps you will be grateful!

7. Remember the goodness of God towards you
and the Covenant He concluded with you when you said:
"We heard and we obeyed."
Fear God,
for verily, God knows best what is in the hearts!

8* O you who have believed!
Be staunch witnesses to justice before God
and do not allow your hatred of sinful people
make you forsake justice.
Verily, justice is next to devotion!
Verily, God is well aware of everything you do!
9. To those who believed and did good works,
God has promised forgiveness and a great reward,
10. and for those who disbelieved and rejected Our Signs,
there is a blazing Fire!

11* O you who have believed!
Remember the goodness God showed you
when some people conspired
to lay their hands upon you,
and He deflected their hands!
So fear God, and let all the believers trust God!

12* [When] God made a Covenant with the Children of Israel,
We appointed twelve leaders from amongst them.
God said:
— I will be with you, if you pray, pay the zakat,
trust and support My Messengers,
and lend God a good loan.
Then, verily, I shall acquit you from the evil of your deeds
and admit you into the Gardens under which the rivers flow.
But if any one of you disbelieves after that,
he will wander away from the straight path.

13* We cursed them and hardened their hearts
for their breaking the Covenant.
They re-arrange the words [of the Message]
and forget part of what has been reminded them.
Time and time again you shall hear
that many of them are betraying you,
but forgive them and overlook,
for, verily, God loves the good-hearted.

14. We concluded a Covenant with those
who call themselves Christians.
Yet they forgot part of the Reminder, and We sowed enmity
and hatred among them till Resurrection Day.
Soon God will announce to them what they have done.

15. O people of the Scripture!
Our Messenger came to you to explain much of the Scripture
that you were hiding or were passing over.
God brought you a Light and a clear Scripture.
16. God uses them to guide on the way of peace
those who followed His goodwill.
By His will, He leads them out of darkness to the Light
and puts them on the straight path.

17* Those who say that God is the Messiah, son of Mary,
have no faith. Say:
"Who would have the power to oppose God
if He wished to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary,
his mother, and everybody on earth?"
God is the Sovereign over Heavens and earth
and what is in between.
He creates whatever He wills — God has power over everything!

18. The Jews and the Christians say:
"We're the sons of God, His beloved ones!"
Say:
"Then, why does He punish you for your sins? —
It's because you're a people He has created!
He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases.
God is the Sovereign of the Heavens and earth
and what is in between, and to Him is [our] return!"

19. O People of the Scripture!
Our Messenger came to you with explanations
after a break between Messengers,
so that you would not say:
"No Carrier of good news nor a Warner has ever come to us!"
But now a Carrier of good news and a Warner did come to you.
Indeed, God has power over all things!

20. Moses said to his people:
"O my people! Remember the goodness of God towards you
when He appointed Prophets from your midst,
made you kings, and gave you what He hadn't given
to any people in the Worlds!
21. O my people!
Enter the Promised Land that God ordained for you,
and do not leave it, lest you be losers!"
22. They said:
"O Moses! A mighty people lives there
and We wouldn't be able to enter it before they leave —
We'll enter it as soon as they're gone!"
23* Two men from among the devout
upon whom God had bestowed His Grace, said:
"Attack them at the gate,
and you'll overcome them as soon as you get in.
Put your trust in God if you believe!"
24. [The people] said:

"O Moses!
We won't be able to enter while they're there.
Go forth with your Lord
and fight them, while we'll be sitting here!"
25. [Moses] said:
"O my Lord! I am responsible only for myself and my brother,
so separate us from the dissolute people!"
26. [God] said:
— Let [the Holy Land] be closed to them for forty years,
and let them wander about on the earth!
And you, do not grieve over dissolute people!

27. Tell them the story of the two sons of Adam.
Both made offerings — one was accepted,
but the other one's was refused.
The latter said [to his brother]:
"I'll kill you, for sure!"
[His brother] said:
"Truly, God accepts [offerings]
only from those who fear Him!
28. I wouldn't lay my hand upon you to kill you,
even if you laid your hand upon me to kill me.
Verily, I fear God, the Lord of the Worlds.
29. But I want you to add to your sins your sin against me,
and to join the inmates of the Fire —
such is the reward for those who do wrong!"
30. But the soul [of his brother] gave in
to the idea of killing his brother:
he murdered him and joined the losers.
31. God sent him a raven which scratched the ground,
showing him how to bury his brother's body.
He said:
"Woe to me! I'm not even equal to this raven
to hide my brother's corpse!"
And he joined those who are torn by remorse.

32. We have ordained to the Children of Israel
that killing a person is like killing a whole nation,
except in [retaliation] for murder
or for causing corruption in the land;
and that saving a life
is like saving the life of a nation.
But even after Our Messengers
came to them with the Proofs,
many of them continued their iniquities in the land.

33* Let execution or crucifixion,
or cutting off a hand on one side
and a foot on the other, or exile from the land,
be the retaliation for those who fight God
and His Messenger and spread corruption in the land.
Let them be disgraced in this life; and in the Hereafter
a great punishment is [in store] for them,

34. except for those who repent before falling in your hands.
Let you know that, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

35. O you who have believed!
Fear God, seek to approach Him
and strive in His way — perhaps you will prosper!

36. If the disbelievers possessed
everything on earth or twice as much,
they still would not be able to ransom themselves
from the punishment of Resurrection Day —
a painful retribution [is in store] for them!
37. They will wish to get out of the Fire,
but they will not be able to escape from it —
their punishment shall be everlasting.

38* To the thieves, men and women, cut their hands off
to punish them for what they have done,
and as a deterrent from God — God is powerful and wise!
39. But if someone repented after committing his crime
and mended his ways, God will turn to him.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
40. Do you not know that God
is the Sovereign of the Heavens and earth?
He punishes whom He wills and forgives whom He wills.
God has power over all things!

41* — O Messenger!
Do not grieve over those who are rushing to disbelief.
They are of those who say with their mouths:
"We do believe,"
but have no faith in their hearts.
Or they are of the Jews who listen to lies
and follow those who have never approached you.
They alter the meaning of words when they say:
"Take what is given to you
and beware of what isn't given to you!"

If God decided to put someone to test,
you could not [intercede] in his behalf before God.
God does not want to purify their hearts —
there is shame for them in this life
and a great retribution in the Hereafter!
42. Indeed, they listen to lies and devour forbidden food.
If they come to you, judge between them
or turn away from them. If you turn away from them,
they will not be able to hurt you in the least.
But if you judge between them, then judge in fairness.
Verily, God likes those who are fair in judgment!
43. But why do they ask you to judge between them
if they possess the Torah with the Law of God?
But if after that, they turn away from you —
they are disbelievers indeed!

44* We have sent down the Torah with Guidance and Light.
The Jews have been judged according to it by the Prophets
who submitted themselves [to God]
and by their rabbis and scholars
who were entrusted with God's Scripture.
They guarded it and witnessed by it.
So do not fear the people, but fear Me,
and do not trade My Signs for a small price!
Those who do not judge by God's Revelation are disbelievers!

45* We have ordained to them [in the Torah]:
— A life for a life, an eye for an eye,
a nose for a nose, a ear for a ear,
a tooth for a tooth, and retaliation for a wound.
But if someone abstained, he would be forgiven.
Those who do not judge by God's Revelation are sinners!

46. We have sent Jesus, son of Mary,
in the footsteps [of the Prophets],
and he confirmed what was already in the Torah.
We gave him the Evangel with Guidance and Light.
That was a confirmation of the Torah,
a Guidance and a Warning for the God-fearing.
47. Let the People of the Evangel judge
by what God has revealed in it.
Those who do not judge by God's Revelation are reprobates!

48* We have sent down to you the Scripture with the Truth
to confirm and preserve the Scripture sent down before.
So judge between [the disbelievers] by God's Revelation,
but do not follow their passions and do not deviate
from the Truth which has come to you.

To each [people] We gave a Law and a Path to perfection.
Had God so willed, He would have made you a single people,
but He wishes to test you by what He has revealed to you.
So compete with one another in good works!
You shall all return to God,
and He will show you the point of your disputes.

49. Judge between them by God's Revelation.
Do not follow their passions and beware of them,
lest they seduce you away from a part of the Revelation
that God has sent down to you.
If they turn away, let you know that God
wants to punish them for some of their sins.
Verily, many people are reprobates!

50* Are they eager to be judged as in the Time of Ignorance?
For people with strong faith,
who is a better judge than God?

51. O you who have believed!
Do not befriend Jews and Christians:
they are friends only among themselves.
Any one of you who seeks [their friendship] is one of them.
Verily, God does not guide sinful people!

52. You see how the ones with disease in their hearts
flock to them, saying:
"We fear that a calamity will strike us!"
If God granted [you] success or a Decision from Himself,
they would regret what they were hiding in their souls.
53. The believers will say:
"Aren't these the ones who swore
by the most solemn oath — by God — that they are with you?"
Vain shall be their works, and they shall be the losers.

54. O you who have believed!
If anyone of you defected from his religion,
then God would soon raise a people
whom He will love, and who will love Him.
They will be humble before the believers
and mighty against the disbelievers.
They will fight in the way of God,
fearless of those who blame them.
Such is the favor that God bestows upon anyone He pleases.
God is all-encompassing and all-knowing!

55. Your friends are God, His Messenger, and the believers
who observe the prayer, pay the zakat, and worship [God].
56* Those who turn to God, His Messenger, and the believers
are the party of God that shall certainly win.

57. O you who have believed!
Do not befriend those who make your religion
the object of derision and fun,
even if they had received the Scripture before you,
or if they are disbelievers.
And fear God if you believe!

58. They take your call to prayer for derision and fun —
indeed, these people lack sense.
59. Say:
"O People of the Scripture!
Do you denigrate us only because we believe in God
and in the Revelation given to us,
and in the Revelation given before us,
and because most of you are reprobates!"

60. Say:
"Shall I tell you about those
who are still worse according to God's judgment?
They are those who incurred God's imprecation and wrath.
[God] changed some of them into apes and swine.

But the lowest in dignity are the idolaters —
they are the farthest away from the even path!"

61. When they come to you, they say:
"We believe,"
but they come with disbelief and depart with it.
God is well aware of what they conceal.
62. You see how many of them compete in sin,
fight one another, and consume forbidden [food].
Evil are their deeds!
63. Why the rabbis and the scholars do not restrain them
from sinful talk and forbidden [food]?
Evil are their works!

64* The Jews say:
"The hands of God are tied up!"
Let their hands be tied up,
and let them be cursed for such words!
No! His Hands are outstretched and He expends as He pleases.
What you have received from your Lord
increases many of them in rebellion and disbelief.
We have sown enmity and hatred amongst them
till Resurrection Day.
Each time they fan the fire of war, God puts it out.
They strive to spread corruption in the land,
but God does not love those who spread corruption!

65. Had the People of the Scripture believed and feared God,
We would have absolved them from their sins
and admitted them to the Gardens of Bliss.
66. Had they held onto the Torah, the Evangel,
and what had been sent down to them by their Lord,
they would have received favors
from above and from under their feet.
Some of them are moderate people,
but evil is what many of them do.

67. — O Messenger!
Proclaim what has been sent down to you from your Lord.
If you do not do it, how will you transmit His Revelation?
God will defend you against people.
Verily, God will not guide the people who disbelieve.

68. Say:
"O People of the Scripture!
You'll have nothing to stand upon
if you don't hold onto the Torah, the Evangel,
and what has come down to you from your Lord."
— [O Muhammad!]
What has come down to you from your Lord
only increases arrogance and disbelief in many of them.
But do not grieve over the disbelievers!

69* Verily, those who have believed, and also the Jews,
the Sabeians, and the Christians —
all those who have believed in God and the Last Day,
and acted uprightly shall suffer neither fear nor grief.

70. We made a Covenant with the Children of Israel
to whom We had been sending Messengers.
But each time the Messengers brought them
something they disliked,
they rejected some of them and killed the others.
71. They were blind and deaf
and presumed that they would not be judged.
God turned to them,
but many stayed as blind and deaf as before.
God sees well all what they do!

72. They are disbelievers if they say:
"Verily, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary."
But the Messiah said:
"O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord."
God will forbid Paradise to any Associator.
His abode will be the Fire — nobody shall help the sinners!
73* They are disbelievers if they say:
"Verily, God is the third of a trinity."
There is no god other than One God!
If they do not retract their words,
a painful penalty shall befall the unbelievers among them.
74. Why would they not turn to God
and ask Him for forgiveness?
Indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

75. The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger
like many of the Messengers who died before him.
His mother was a righteous woman,
and both of them ate food.
See how We make the Signs clear to them,
and look at them as they turn away.

76. Say:
"How can you worship besides God
something that neither benefits nor hurts you?
God is the All-hearing, the All-knowing."
77. Say:
"O People of the Scripture!
Don't go beyond the limits of Truth in your religion
and don't follow the passions of the people
who misled themselves in the past, misled many [others],
and wandered off the even path."
78. The disbelievers among the Children of Israel
were cursed by the tongues of David and Jesus, son of Mary,
because they had rebelled and transgressed.
79. They had not restrained one another from sinful conduct.
Evil were their deeds!

80* You see that many of them
want to befriend the disbelievers.
Evil is what their souls have prepared!
God is angry at them —
their punishment shall be everlasting.
81. Had they believed in God, the Prophet,
and what has been revealed to him,
they would not have befriended them.
Many of them are reprobates!

82* You see that those who hate the believers the most
are the Jews and the idolaters.
You see that the closest to the believers in affection
are those who say: "We're Christians!"
Indeed, among them there are people devoted to study,
people who have left the world
and do not aggrandize themselves.
83. You see that their eyes overflow with tears
when they listen to the Revelation
that was sent down to the Messenger
because they recognize the Truth.
They say:
"O our Lord! We do believe, so write us down as witnesses.
84. How wouldn't we believe in God and in the Truth
that has come to us if we want to be joined by our Lord
to the righteous people?"
85. For their words God will reward them with Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide in them for ever.
Such is the reward for those who do good.
86. And those who disbelieved and rejected Our Signs
shall dwell in the blazing Fire.

87. O you, who have believed! Do not forbid the good things
that God has made lawful for you, but avoid excess!
Verily, God does not love those who are given to excess.
88. Eat the lawful and wholesome God is providing you with
and fear God in Whom you believe.

89. God will not take you to task
for the trivial in your oaths,
but He will take you to task for serious oaths.
In expiation, feed ten indigent people
with what you feed your families
or clothe them, or free a slave.
If this is beyond your means, then fast for three days.
This will be in expiation for the oaths you have sworn.
So keep to your oaths!
This is how God makes His Signs clear to you —
perhaps you will be grateful!

90. O you, who have believed!
Wine, maisir, stone altars, and [divining] with arrows
are abominations, the work of Satan.
Avoid them — perhaps you will be successful.

91. With the help of wine and maisir,
Satan wishes to seed enmity and hatred among you
and to divert you from praying and remembering God.
Will you not restrain yourselves?
92. Obey God, obey the Messenger, and be ever on your guard.
But if you turn away, then know
that Our Messenger's duty is only a clear proclamation.
93* Those who believed and did right should not be blamed
for what they had eaten [in the past]
if they fear God, believe, and do good works;
and again, if they fear God and believe;
and again, if they fear God and do good works.
God loves those who do good works!

94. O you, who have believed!
To find out who fears Him in secret,
[God] will test you by the game
that falls into your hands or upon your spears.
And whoever transgresses after that
shall receive a painful retribution.
95* O you, who have believed!
Do not kill any game during pilgrimage.
And whoever kills intentionally
must make an offering of cattle to the Ka'ba,
equivalent in value to the game he has killed,
as determined by two just people from among yourselves;
or he must atone by feeding the poor
or doing its equivalent in fasting
to taste the penalty for his conduct.
God overlooks the past,
but God exacts a retribution from a repeat offender.
God is mighty and demanding!
96* During pilgrimage, you and the travelers
are allowed to catch and consume seafood,
but you are forbidden to hunt on land.
Fear God to Whom you shall be gathered!

97. God has made the Sacred House, the Ka'ba,
a sanctuary for the people.
[He established] the sacred month
and [animal] offerings with [their] ornaments.
Know that God is aware of everything
in the Heavens and on earth.
God has knowledge of everything!
98. Keep in mind that God is stern in punishment,
but God is also forgiving and merciful!
99. The duty of the Messenger is only to transmit.
God knows what you reveal and what you conceal.
100. Say:
"Evil and virtue aren't equal,
albeit the abundance of evil may seduce you.
Be God-fearing, o you, men of understanding —
perhaps you will prosper!"

101*O you, who have believed!
Do not ask questions about things
that might cause you grief if they are disclosed to you.
But if you ask about them while the Koran is being revealed,
and they become clear to you, God will forgive you for that,
indeed, God is forgiving and forbearing!
102*People have been asking such questions before your time,
and have lost their faith as a result.

103*[The rites] of bahira, sa'iba, wasila and hami
have not been instituted by God,
but by the disbelievers who invent falsehood about God —
indeed, most of them lack sense.
104. When told:
"Come to what God has revealed, come to the Messenger,"
they say:
"What has been observed by our fathers is enough for us!"
Even if their fathers were ignorant and had no Guidance!

105. O you, who have believed!
Protect your souls!
No one who is astray will hurt you
if you follow the Guidance.
You shall all be returned to God,
and He will tell you what you have done.

106*O you, who have believed!
At the approach of death, when it is time to make a bequest,
call as witnesses two just men from your midst.
And if calamity strikes you
during your travels in the land and you might die,
then [invite] two others from among the strangers.
If you have doubts [about them],
retain them after the prayer and let them swear by God:
"We shall not seek any gain even for a near relative;
and we shall not conceal any evidence before God,
or we will be guilty of sin!"
107*But if it appears that these two have perjured themselves,
then let them be replaced by two others more credible
among those who disagreed with them.
Let them also swear by God:
"Our testimony is more reliable than the testimony
of these two, and we'll not transgress [the law];
or evil will be upon us!"
108. This is appropriate, as their testimony will be true
if they fear that their oaths
will be followed by other oaths.
Fear God and listen [to Him] —
indeed, God does not guide the reprobates.

109. The day will come when God will gather the Messengers
and say:

— How did they respond?
They will say:
“We don’t know —
You’re the only One, Who knows the Unseen!”
110*Then God will say:
— O Jesus, son of Mary!
Remember My goodness to you and to your mother.
Remember how I fortified you with the Holy Spirit
to let you speak to the people in infancy and in maturity.
Remember how I taught you the Scripture,
the Wisdom, the Torah, and the Evangel.
Remember how, with My permission,
you made the likeness of a bird from clay,
breathed upon it; and with My permission, it became a bird.
Remember how, with My permission,
you healed the blind and the lepers.
Remember how, with My permission, you revived the dead.
Remember how I restrained from you the Children of Israel
when you came to them with clear Proofs
and the disbelievers among them called it a plain magic!
111* Remember how I inspired the apostles
with faith in Me and My Messenger. They said:
“We’ve believed!
And you, be witness to our surrender to God!”
112*Remember how the disciples said:
“O Jesus son of Mary!
Can your Lord descend upon us a set Table from Heaven?”
[Jesus] said:
“Fear God if you believe!”
113. They said:
“We want to eat from it to appease our hearts
and to make sure that you’ve told us the truth.
Then we ourselves will be witnesses to it!”
114. Jesus, son of Mary, said:
“O God our Lord! Descend upon us a set Table from heaven!
It’ll be a celebration and a Sign from You
for the first to the last one of us.
And supply us with provisions —
indeed, You’re the best of providers!”
115. God said:
— I am going to descend it upon you,
but if any one disbelieves after that,
I will punish him with a penalty
that I have never inflicted on anyone in the Worlds.
116*Then God said:
— O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you really say to the people:
“Take me and my mother as two gods besides God”?
[Jesus] said:
“Glory to You! How could I say something I knew
I had no right [to say]?
Had I said so, You’d have known it;
indeed, You know what’s in my soul,
but I don’t know Your intentions.

Verily, You're the only One, Who knows the Unseen!
117. I didn't tell them anything, except what you've ordered me:
"Serve God my Lord and your Lord!"
I've been their witness as long as I stayed with them.
And after You made me die, You Yourself watched over them —
indeed, You're the Witness of all things.
118. You can punish them as Your servants or forgive them —
indeed, You're the Sublime, the Wise."

119. Then God said:
— This is the Day when the truthful
shall benefit from their truthfulness.
There shall be Gardens for them under which the rivers flow,
where they shall abide for ever.
God will be satisfied with them
and they will be satisfied with God.
That shall be a great success!

120. God is the Sovereign of Heavens and earth,
and of everything that is there.
He has power over everything!

Vv. 1-2: "During pilgrimage," or "while you are in **haram** (the state of sanctity)." Pilgrimage plays an important role in the life of a Muslim. It reminds him of the gathering on Judgment Day, which will culminate in a joyous reconciliation with God.

V. 4: Hunting with dogs, falcons and other trained animals.

V. 6: To purify oneself is to take a ritual bath. Rubbing oneself with clean sand or soil is the rite of **tayammun**.

V. 8: Reference to the Jews of Medina who joined Islam.

V. 11: The Prophet's enemies were plotting his assassination.

V. 12: Possibly, the twelve leaders who assisted Moses.

V. 13: The Jews are accused of twisting the words of the Scriptures, demeaning the Evangel and the Koran, and following more restrictive dietary laws than those prescribed in the Torah.

V. 17: If the Messiah were God, how God could have killed him? The Arabs call the Christians **Nasara** (people of Nazareth) or **Masihi** (followers of the Messiah).

V. 23: The two men in question were probably the scouts sent by the Jews to investigate the Promised Land.

V. 33: Note that the punishment for sedition and corruption is the one inflicted by Pharaoh on the disaffecting Magicians (S.20: 71). These words are said for intimidation: the Byzantine cruelty of mutilation was alien to the true Muslims.

V. 38: "Cut their hands off to the thieves" or "hit them on the hands." If mutilation were really meant, the amends and pardon mentioned in the following v.39 would be meaningless.

V. 41: "Take it if it's given to you, and if it's not given to you, beware!" The Jews are accused of rejecting the Koran under the pretense that it has not been revealed directly to them.

V. 44: Many Koranic verses start with a singular subject and conclude with plural words ending in **een** or **oon** that easily rhyme among themselves (S.26:21).

V. 45: Both Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad recommended atonement by an act of charity.

V. 48: "The Law (**shir'a**) and a Path to perfection (**minhadj**)." The first is the civil law, and the second is the way to spiritual growth. The interpretation of the shariah is the duty of the Muslim jurists (**'ulema**) who apply the tenets of the Koran under changing conditions for centuries. They use three basic principles: consensus (**idjma'**), comparison (**qias**), and analysis (**idjtihad**).

V. 50: The time of Ignorance (**jahiliya**) is the pre-Islamic era in Arabia. Contemporary Muslims frequently perceive in modern western lifestyle a return to "jahiliya".

V. 56: The party of God, in Arabic: **hezbu-lla**.

V. 64: "The hand of God is tied up," i.e., God is stingy.

V. 69: The Sabeians (**Sabi'un**) — the Zoroastrians, S.2:62).

V. 73: Eating food is a sign of being human.

V. 80: Here the "disbelievers" are the Jews.

V. 82: The "people devoted to study, people who have left the world" are, apparently, Christian priests and monks. The closest to Islam are the Christians who accepted the Koran.

V. 93: The construction of this verse has not ben changed. Grammatical elegance must sometimes yield to accuracy. If the editors did not revere the Koranic words, the editorial process could have taken centuries and "improvements" in style and form would have deprived the text of authenticity, vivacity, and spontaneity. The phrases, modulations, and rhythm of the Bible, be it English, Latin, Russian, French, even Greek and Hebrew have been created by translators.

V. 95: "During pilgrimage," lit., "when you are in **haram**." Haram is a sacred place or the state of the pilgrim (vv. 1-2).

V. 96: Here, "sea" includes rivers and lakes.

V. 101: The Muslims are advised to abstain from vacuous questions. Clarification should be sought for at a recital of the Koran: then it can be dispensed in the spirit of Islam.

V. 102: This is a reference to S.2:68-71 where Moses asked the Jews to make the sacrifice of a cow.

V. 103: **Bahira, sa'iba, wasila** and **hami** are breeds of camels revered by the pagans.

V. 107: "Perjure themselves" or "are committing sin."

V. 110: The Evangel (**ingil**) is the primary account of the life of Jesus and not the four Gospels. The Prophet Muhammad was aware of the Christian dogmas. According to tradition, when he was twelve years old, he had met a Christian monk, Bahira (or Sergius), a convinced monotheist. Bahira discerned in Muhammad the mark of a Prophet. The Prophet could also have learned about Jesus from his cousin Waraqa ibn Naufal, a Christian who converted to Islam.

V. 111: The disciples, **al-hawariyun**.

V. 112: "The Table set" or "the Meal" may refer to the Last Supper or the Eucharist.

V. 116: The trinity of God, Jesus, and his mother Mary.

SURA 6 (II) CATTLE. ***The second part of S.6 deals mainly with dietary prescriptions (esp. vv. 118-121; 138-147). The first part is on p. 312.***

6. *CATTLE*
Meccan, 165 verses

PART II. (VV. 118-165)

118*Consume [meat] over which the name of God
has been pronounced if you believe in His Signs.
119. Why do you consume only under coercion [food]
over which the Name of God has been pronounced?
Has He not explained what is forbidden to you?
Verily, many [people] lead [others] astray
by their lusts unfettered by Knowledge.
Verily, your Lord knows best those who transgress.
120. Avoid sin, both open and secret.
Verily, those who accumulate sins
shall be rewarded for what they have amassed.

121. Do not consume [meat] over which the Name of God
has not been pronounced — verily, this is an iniquity.
Indeed, the Satans inspire their clients to challenge you,
and if you obeyed them, you would become Associators.

122*Does the lifeless [person] to whom We gave life
and a light by which he walks among the people
resemble the one who remained in complete darkness
and cannot find a way out?
The deeds of the disbelievers are embellished for them!

123. In every town We allow some notables —
the wicked ones — to spin their schemes.
But their schemes turn against their own souls,
albeit they do not perceive [it].
124*When a Sign comes to them, they say:
"We won't believe until we get ourselves
what God has given to the Messengers."
But God knows best how to transmit His Message.
For their scheming the sinners shall suffer
humiliation before God and a severe punishment.

125. God opens the heart to Islam
in those He wants to guide to the straight path.
But He narrows and constricts the heart
of those He lets go astray, so that they feel
as if they were forced to clamber to the sky.
This is how God punishes those who disbelieve!
126. Such is the straight path of your Lord.
We have explained the Signs to the people
who remember Admonition.
127. Theirs is the Abode of Peace with their Lord,
and He is the Guarantor of their deeds.

128*The Day will come when He will gather them all:

— O you, assembly of Jinn!
Have you profited much from men?
Their clients from mankind shall say:
"O our Lord! We were mutually useful.
But now we've reached the term You've set for us."
[God] will say:
— Your abode shall be the Fire
in which You shall stay for ever,
unless God wills it otherwise.
Verily, your Lord is wise and all-knowing!

129. This is how we draw sinners together in their doings:
130. — O you, company of Jinn and men!
Have not some Messengers come from your midst
to communicate My Signs to you and to warn you
about your meeting on this Day? They will say:
"We're witnessing against ourselves!"
This is how life on earth has deluded them
and this is how they will accuse themselves
of having denied faith.

131. Your Lord does not destroy towns unjustly
without first warning their dwellers.
132. Their degree [of guilt] corresponds to their actions —
indeed, Your Lord will not overlook any of their deeds.
133. Your Lord is the Rich, He is the Wielder of mercy.

If He wills, He will destroy you
and replace you by anyone He wills,
just as He raised you up from
the progeny of another people.
134. Verily, what has been promised to you is forecoming,
and you will not be able to interfere!
135. Say:
"O my people! Do what you want, and I'll do [what I want].
But soon you'll learn who will get the best abode.
Verily, the wrong-doers shall not be successful!"
136*[The disbelievers] set aside for God
a share of tilth and cattle He has produced, and affirm:
"This is for God, and that is for our partners."
But the share of their partners does not reach God,
whereas the share of God goes to their partners.
How bad is their judgment!

137. Moreover, their partners have made killing their children
appear commendable to many Associators,
in order to destroy them and to muddle their religion.
Had God so willed, they would not have done that.
So leave them with their fabrications!

138*They say that a part of cattle and crops is prohibited.
They pretend that nobody may consume them,
except those who have Our permission;

and that there is cattle
on which it is forbidden to ride,
and cattle over which God's Name should not be pronounced.
All this has been contrived against God —
soon He will punish them for their fabrications!
139*They say:
"The innards of this cattle
are allowed to our men and forbidden to our spouses;
but they can share the stillborn."
Soon He shall punish them for their interpretation.
Verily, He is wise and all-knowing!

140.Those who kill their children
out of foolishness and ignorance,
who forbid the food that God has given them,
and who make false pretenses about God
will surely be among the losers.
They are astray and do not follow the Guidance.

141*He is the One Who has provided
trellised and untrellised gardens,
palm-trees and all sorts of produce,
and olives and pomegranates of one or various kinds.
Eat their fruit when they are ripe
and pay your dues on harvest day,
but do no spend foolishly —
verily, God does not love the profligate.

142*Some cattle are for carrying burdens
and others for slaughter.
Eat of the provisions provided by God
and do not follow in Satan's footsteps.
Verily, he is your declared enemy.
143.[Take] eight heads [of cattle]:
a pair of sheep and a pair of goats...
Say:
"Are both males or both females forbidden to you,
or what is in the wombs of the females?
Convince me if you're telling the truth!"
144....and a pair of camels and a pair of oxen.
Say:
"Are both males or both females forbidden to you,
or what is in the wombs of the females?
Were you present when God issued this command?"

Who does a greater wrong than the one who invents a lie
against God in order to mislead ignorant people?
Verily, God does not guide the people who do wrong!
145*Say:
"In the inspiration I have received
I don't see anything forbidden, except carrion,
spilled blood, and pork — this is disgusting!
And if a name other than God's

has been invoked over it, that's corrupt!"
But if one eats it by necessity
and is not enticed by it or does not return to it...
Verily, your Lord is forgiving and merciful!

146*We have forbidden to the Jews animals with undivided hoofs.
We have forbidden to them the fat of oxen and sheep,
except when it adheres to the backs and entrails
or is mixed with bones.
Such is Our punishment for their disobedience —
indeed, We are supporting the Truth!

147. When they accuse you of lying, say:
"Broad is the mercy of your Lord,
but His wrath shall not spare the people who sin!"
148. The Associators will say:
"Had God so willed, we wouldn't have associated
anyone with Him, and our fathers would't have done it.
And we wouldn't have had any restrictions."
Their predecessors had also been lying,
until they tasted Our punishment.
Say:
"If you have Knowledge, show it to us.
But you're only following conjectures and spinning lies."

149*Say:
"God has the convincing Proofs. Had He so willed,
He would've guided you all on the straight path."
150. Say:
"Bring forth your witnesses and let them testify
about God's restrictions."
If they testify, don't testify with them,
and don't follow the passions
of those who reject Our Signs
and do not believe in the Hereafter —
indeed, they make [others] equal to their Lord.
151*Say:
"Come, and I'll tell you
what your Lord has forbidden you."
— Do not associate anything with Him,
be kind to your parents,
and do not to slay your children if you are poor —
We will provide for you and for them.
Avoid indecencies, overt or secret,
and do not kill a soul that God has forbidden [to kill],
except by the way of law.
This is what He demands of you —
perhaps you will understand!

152. Do not approach the property of an orphan
until he reaches maturity,
unless you want to increase it.
Give a full measure and be equitable in weighing.

We do not load any soul with more than she can bear.
Be fair when you speak, even if it concerns a relative,
and fulfill the Covenant with God.
This is what He enjoined you — perhaps you'll remember!

153. Verily, this is My straight path. Keep to it and avoid
the ways that might divert you from His direction.
This is what He commanded you — perhaps you'll fear God!

154. To Moses We gave the Scripture to fulfill goodness
and to explain all things, and also Guidance and Grace —
perhaps they will believe in the meeting with their Lord!
155. This is the Scripture We have sent down as a blessing.
Follow it and fear God — perhaps you will be pardoned!
156*Do not say:
"The Scripture has been sent down before us to two nations,
but we aren't aware of what they have learnt."
157. And do not say:
"Had the Scripture been sent down to us,
we would've followed the Guidance better than they."
The Guidance and the Grace that came to you
are the clear Proofs from your Lord.

Who does a greater harm than the one
who rejects the Signs of God and turns away from them?
We will soon reward with an evil punishment
those who reject Our Signs and turn away.
158. Are they waiting for the coming of the Angels or your Lord,
or for the coming before them of other Signs of your Lord?
On the Day of the coming of other Signs of your Lord,
faith shall not help their souls,
unless they had believed before
and had earned some goodness by their faith.
Say:
"Wait, and we will also wait!"
159*Verily, you have nothing to do with those
who have divided their religion into sects.
Their case is before God —
He will tell them what they have done.
160. Whoever comes with good deeds
shall get them back, increased tenfold,
and whoever comes with evil deeds
shall get a retribution of equal worth.
And nobody shall be treated unjustly!
161. Say:
"Verily, my Lord has guided me
on the straight path of the right religion —
the creed of Abraham, the Hanif,
who was not an Associator."
162. Say:
"Verily, my prayer, my devotion, my living,
and my dying are all for God, the Lord of the Worlds.
163. He has no god associated with Him!

So it has been commanded to me,
and I'm the first to submit myself [to Him]!"
164. Say:
"Shall I seek someone else besides God,
the Lord of everything that exists?
All what a soul earns, she earns for herself.

No one bearing a burden will bear someone else's burden.
In the end you shall all return to your Lord,
Who will tell you about your dissensions."

165. He is the One, Who made you inherit the earth.
He has raised some of you above the others in ranks
to test you by what He has bestowed upon you.
Verily, your Lord is quick in retaliation.
Verily, He is all-forgiving and merciful!

Vv. 118f: Prohibitions concerning meat products.

V. 122: The "dead person" is a metaphor about spiritual death and resurrection.

V. 124: That the Koran is God's Truth is proven by the Signs which are ubiquitous in the world and in the Unseen. The ability of man to understand, love, and feel is by itself a clear Sign or a Proof of God's compassion. The Jews are accused of refusing a Revelation unless it is given directly to them (cf. S.5:41).

V. 128: Here, the Jinn are forces of evil. "We were useful to each other" — people to people, or people to the Jinn? There is a glimpse of hope that the Compassionate could eventually cut the punishment short.

V. 136: It is bad judgment to give God only a portion of what belongs to Him in its entirety. The Pagans dedicated their crops both to God and the idols, but favored their idols at harvest time. V. 138: The Pagans used to consecrate animals to various gods.

Idols were usually in the image of idealized people or animals. To underscore the fallacy of the cults of false gods, Islam initially forbade the representation of people and animals in all decorative arts. The description of Angels as creatures with many pairs of wings (S.35:1) is purely allegorical and does not lead to pictorial representation. Angels are never fancied as youths in white robes nor Demons as monsters with horns and goat's feet.

V. 139: A denunciation of superstitions (cf. also vv. 143-4).

V. 141: "Pay the dues" — to God or to the poor.

V. 142: Are all the beasts of burden fit for food?

V. 145: Is all blood forbidden or only the one that was shed?

V. 146: "Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat (Lev. 11:3). Muslims call wholesome food "**halal**" and prohibited food "**haram**" (harem is of the same root).

V. 149: Life would have been simpler if God had created only one nation and allowed only one religion. Then hopelessly tragic situations would not have occurred in many multi-ethnic states.

Vv. 151-152: It is unclear where the "Say" passage ends.

V. 156: It was difficult for the Muslims to understand the Bible and the Evangel, which belonged to another age, and whose languages were foreign for the Arabs. The Muslims revere

the Torah that has been given to Moses, David's Psalms, the Evangel, and the lost Scrolls given to Abraham (cf. C.87:19).

V. 159: To divide religion is to choose in it only what is in one's own interest.

SURA 2 (II) THE COW. ***Here begins the second part of S.2. By its contents and style, S.2 (II) resembles S.5. It deals with at least four main themes in mixed order: 1) food (vv. 168-169, 172-73), wine and gambling (v.219), proper behavior (vv. 189, 267), and usury and lending (vv. 275, 280, 282-283); 2) prayer (vv. 238-239), making contributions (vv. 195, 215, 254, 261-267, 270-274), pilgrimage (vv. 189, 194, 196-203, 217), and fasting (vv. 183-187); 3) justice (v.188), oaths (vv. 224-225), retaliation and murder (vv. 178-179), wills (vv. 180-182, 240), orphans (v.220), marriage (vv. 221-223), and divorce (vv. 226-237, 241); and 4) the absence of compulsion in religion (v.256), the Christians (v.253), a few Biblical Prophets (vv. 246-251), and conduct in war (vv. 190-195, 216-218, 243-244).***

2. THE COW

Medinan, 286 verses

PART II. (VV. 163-286)

163. Your God is One God!
There is no god but Him, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

164*Verily, in the creation of Heavens and earth,
in the succession of night and day,
in the ships that sail upon the sea for man's benefit,
in the water that God sends down from the sky
to revive the earth after it had died,
in the dispersal of animals on it, in the change of winds,
in the clouds caught between the sky and the earth,
there are Signs for the people who think.

165. Some people take [gods] besides God as [His] equals
and love them as they love God,
but the love of the believers for God is much stronger.
If the wrong-doers were able to see,
they would see the punishment
and realize that all power is with God,
and that God is severe in retaliation!

166. When the leaders will abandon their followers,
they will see the punishment
and their ties will break off.
167. Those who followed them shall say:
"If we only had a chance,
we would've disowned them,
just as they've disowned us!"
Then God will show them
how much their actions were damaging to them,
and that they have no way out of the Fire!

168. O people! Of all that is upon the earth,
eat only what is lawful and good,
and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan —
indeed, he is your declared enemy.
169. He urges you to commit evil and indecency,
and to accuse God of something you do not know.
170. When told:
"Follow God's Revelation,"
they say:
"No, we'll follow what we've inherited from our fathers."
But their fathers had little understanding
and did not follow the Guidance.

171. The disbelievers are like those who respond only to yelling.
They hear nothing but calls and cries —
they are deaf, dumb, and blind; they lack understanding.

172. O you, who have believed!
Eat of the good things We have provided you with
and be grateful to God if you are worshiping Him.
173*He has forbidden you carrion, blood, pork, and [food]
over which a name other than God's had been invoked.
But if someone does it under duress
and not out of disobedience or enmity,
there will be no sin upon him.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

174. Verily, those who conceal for a small gain
the smallest part of the Scripture revealed by God
are stuffing their bellies with Fire.
On Resurrection Day God will not turn to them
and will not purify them.
A painful punishment is [in store] for them!
175. They are of those who traded Guidance for error
and forgiveness for punishment.
They are obstinate even before the Fire!
176. It is because God has sent down a Scripture with the Truth —
verily, those who contest the Scripture are in deep dissent.

177*Righteousness is not in turning your faces east or west.
Righteousness is in believing in God, the Last Day,
the Angels, the Scripture, and the Prophets;
in contributing, out of love for Him,
to relatives, to orphans, to the needy,
to travelers, to beggars, and to the captives;
in observing the prayer, paying the zakat,
and fulfilling one's obligations;
in being patient in suffering, adversity, and war —
such are the truthful, such are those who fear God!

178*O you, who have believed!
Here is the balanced retaliation imposed on you for murder:
a free [man] for a free [man],

a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman.
If the brother [of the victim] forgives,
then resolve the [case] according to custom,
and compensate him in an amiable way.
There is relief in this and mercy from your Lord;
but a repeat transgressor shall get a painful punishment!
179. O people with sense!
There is life for you in balanced retaliation —
perhaps you will fear God!

180*If you own property, and death approaches you,
you ought to draw a will, as required by custom,
naming your parents and relatives.
Such is the duty of the God-fearing!

181. If [a will] is changed after its reading,
then those who changed it are guilty.
Verily, God hears and knows [everything]!
182. But if someone, fearing partiality
or malice on the part of the testator,
reconciles [the contenders],
no guilt shall be upon him.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

183. O you who have believed!
Fasting is prescribed to you,
as it has been prescribed to your predecessors,
perhaps, you will fear God!
184. There is a prescribed number of days [for fasting];
but if anyone of you is sick or is traveling,
their number should [be completed] on other days.
Any one who cannot do it must redeem himself
by feeding a poor person, but it is better for him
to give more of his own accord.
Fasting is better for you, if you [only] knew!

185. Ramadan is the month of the revelation of the Koran —
a Guide with clear Proofs for men,
for their Guidance and Salvation.
Everybody should spend this month fasting!
But if any one is sick or is on the road,
let him complete the missed days later on —
indeed, God wants to make things easy for you.
After completing the number [of days],
glorify Him for His Guidance —
perhaps, you will be grateful!

186. If My servants ask you about Me, [tell them]
that I am nearby and that I will answer the prayer
of everyone who prays if he calls upon Me.
Let them respond to Me and believe in Me —
perhaps, they will walk in the right path!

187*You are allowed to approach your wives
during the fast at night.
They are a garment for you,
and you are a garment for them.
God knows that you will be deceiving yourselves,
so He turned to you and forgave you.
Therefore, approach them and seek
what God has prescribed to you.
Eat and drink till dawn,
until you can tell a white thread from a black one,
and then keep fasting till nightfall.
And do not approach [your wives]
when you retreat to the mosques.
Such are the limits of God — do not transgress them.
This is how God makes His Signs clear to the people —
perhaps, they will be God-fearing!

188. Do not consume your property among yourselves frivolously,
and do not use it to bribe judges
in order to consume unlawfully and knowingly
a part of [other] people's property.

189*If you are asked about the new moons, say:
"They are Signs for people to keep time
and [to perform] the pilgrimage."

It is not proper to sneak into a house from the back,
but it is proper to fear God.
So enter a house through the front door and fear God —
perhaps, you will prosper!

190. Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you,
but do not transgress any limits.
Verily, God does not love the transgressors.
191. Slay them wherever you come upon them
and expel them from where they have expelled you.
Indeed, persecution is worse than murder!
But do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque,
unless they attack you first.
Slay them if they fight you —
such is the retribution for those who disbelieve!
192. But if they refrain themselves,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
193. Fight them to the end of the persecutions,
and until religion is restored to God.
If they stop, hostility will end,
except against the wrong-doers.

194*A sacred month — for a sacred month.
The law of balanced retaliation applies to prohibitions.
If anyone attacks you, attack him as he attacked you;
but fear God and know that God is with the God-fearing.

195. Contribute to the cause of God
and do not let your hands lead you to destruction.
Do good works — verily, God loves those who do good!

196*Complete the pilgrimage and the [rite of] 'umra
for God's sake; but if something stands in your way,
contribute according to your means.
And do not shave your head
until the offering reaches its destination.
If any one of you is sick or has sores on his scalp,
let him substitute shaving by fasting,
almsgiving, or making an offering.
When peace returns, anyone can carry over
[the rite] of 'umra to pilgrimage;
but first let him make an offering according to his means.
If he does not have the means,
let him fast three days while in pilgrimage
and seven upon his return for a total of ten.
This does not apply to the families
living by the Sacred Mosque.
Fear God and remember that God is severe in punishment.
197*The months of pilgrimage are known to all.
Whoever takes upon himself the duty of pilgrimage
must abstain from intercourse and vice
and avoid quarreling during pilgrimage.
Whatever good you do, God will be aware of it!
Prepare provisions, but the best provision
is the fear of God. So fear Me if you have sense.

198*You shall not be at fault if [during pilgrimage]
you seek a bounty from your Lord.
After coming down from [Mount] 'Arafat,
celebrate God at the Sacred Memorial
and remember how He has guided you,
even if you were astray before.
199. Then move further along with the other people
and ask God for forgiveness —
verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

200. After performing your religious duties, remember God,
as you remember your fathers, but even with more fervor.
Some people say:
"Our Lord! Give us [Your bounty] in this world!"
But they shall have no part in the Hereafter!
201. Among them there are those who say:
"Our Lord! Give us goodness in this world
and goodness in the Hereafter,
protect us from the punishment by the Fire!"
202. These shall receive a share of their earnings —
indeed, God is quick at accounting.
203*Celebrate God on the appointed days!
There shall be no blame on someone
who leaves two days earlier,

as there shall be no blame on someone who stays longer.
This is for those who fear God — so fear God and remember
that you shall [all] appear before Him.

204. Among the people [you may find] someone
who will impress you by his talk
about the life of this world,
and he will call God to witness what is in his heart.
He is your most implacable enemy!
205. Indeed, turning around, he will spread disorder in the land
and destroy cultures and young cattle.
God does not love corruption!
206. When told:
"Fear God,"
his arrogance entices him to sin.
Hell is enough for him — what a bad couch it is!

207. Among the people [you may find] someone
who devotes his soul to winning God's satisfaction.
God is full of kindness for [His] servants!

208. O you who have believed!
Surrender yourselves [to God] completely
and do not follow in Satan's footsteps —
verily, he is your declared enemy!
209. But if you falter after receiving the Proofs,
know that God is almighty and wise!

210. Are they waiting for God to descend upon them
with the Angels under the canopy of clouds,
thus bringing the matter to an end?
But [all] affairs return to God!

211. Ask the Children of Israel
how many clear Signs We have sent them!
If someone altered the favor of God
after it had reached him,
then, verily, God is severe in punishment.

212. The life of this world is embellished for the disbelievers.
They laugh at the believers, but on Resurrection Day
the God-fearing shall be raised above them.
God gives limitless provisions to anyone He wills.

213* [At first] people formed one community.
God used to send them Prophets
as Carriers of good tidings and Warners.
He sent down with them a Scripture with the Truth
to resolve all contentions between people.
But those who received it continued to argue
in order to oppress the others
after the clear Proofs came to them.
By His Grace God disclosed to the believers

the true cause of the discord.
God guides to the straight path those He wills.

214. Do you think that you will enter Paradise
without going through what your predecessors went through?
They had suffered such grief, distress, and shock that even
the Messenger and those who believed with him kept saying:
"When will God help us?"
But, verily, God's help is nearby!

215. They ask you what they should contribute.
Say:
"Everything valuable! Indeed, all you contribute is for
parents, relatives, and orphans, the poor and the wayfarers.
Verily, God is well aware of your good works."

216. It is prescribed for you to fight,
even though you dislike it.
Yet, you may dislike what is good for you
and like what is bad for you.
God knows, but you do not know.

217. They ask you about war during the sacred month.
Say:
"Fighting during [this month] is a great [sin].
But a greater [sin] in the eyes of God
is preventing access to God while denying Him,
and [admission] to the Sacred Mosque,
while expelling people from it."

Oppression is worse than murder!
They will not cease to fight you
until they turn you away from your religion,
if they only could do it.
But those who turn away from their religion
and die in disbelief, their deeds will be to no avail
both in this world and in the Hereafter.
They are the inmates of the Fire
in which they shall stay for ever!
218. Verily, the believers who had been exiled
while fighting in the cause of God, aspire to God's mercy —
indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

219. They ask you about wine and the game of maisir.
Say:
"There is a great sin in them
and also some profit for people,
albeit more sin than profit."

They ask you how much they have to contribute.
Say:
"All you can spare!"
This is how God explains the Signs to you —

perhaps, you will start thinking
about this life and the Hereafter!

220.They ask you about the orphans.
Say:
"It's best to act in their interest.
If you become their partners, they become your brothers.
God can tell the corrupt from the righteous.
If God so willed, He could cause you trouble —
verily, He is all-mighty and all-wise!"

221.Do not marry [female] Associators until they believe.
A believing female slave is better than an Associator
who appeals to you.
Do not wed [your women] to Associators until they believe.
A believing male slave is better than an Associator
who appeals to you and calls you to the Fire.
But by His Grace God calls you
to the Garden and to forgiveness.
Thus He explains His Signs to the people —
perhaps they will come to their senses!

222*They ask you about menstruation.
Say:
"It's a pain and a pollution!
So withdraw from women in menstruation
and don't come near them until they purified themselves.
After they purified themselves,
approach them as God has commanded you to do."
Verily, God loves those who turn to him,
and He loves those who purify themselves.

223.Your women are like your fields,
so go to your fields whenever you wish,
but first do something good for your soul.
Fear God and keep in mind that you shall meet Him;
and announce the good tidings to the believers!

224.Do not use God's Name in your oaths
as an excuse for abstaining from good works,
devotion, and peace-making among people.
God is hearing and all-knowing!
225.God will not hold you accountable
for the superficial in your oaths,
but He will hold you accountable
for the intentions in your hearts.
God is forgiving and full of love!

226.Those who swore not to approach their wives
have to wait four months, but if they return,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
227.And if they decide to divorce,
then verily, God is hearing and all-knowing!

228.Divorced women must wait three periods.
If they believe in God and the Last Day,
they are not allowed to hide
what God has created in their wombs.
It is more honorable for their husbands
to take them back during that time
if they incline toward reconciliation.
By custom, [women] have the same rights as men,
albeit men have a degree of advantage over them.
God is all-mighty and all-wise!

229.Divorce [is allowed] twice.
After that, let them stay together as customary
or separate on kindly terms.
[The husband] should not take back any of his gifts
if they are both apprehensive
of transgressing the limits set up by God.
But if you fear that they will not be able to keep
the limits set up by God, then neither of them
shall be at fault if [the wife] buys herself out.
Such are the limits set up by God —
do not transgress them!
Whoever exceeds God's limits is doing wrong.

230*A man who divorces [irrevocably]
cannot remarry [his wife]
before she marries someone else,
and [the latter] divorces her.
After that neither of them shall be at fault
if they return [to each other]
and agree to keep the limits set up by God.
Such are the limits set up by God
which He makes clear to the people who understand.

231. When you divorce your wives,
you can retain them according to custom,
to the end of the time prescribed for them,
or let them go according to custom.
But do not retain them to harm or to oppress them.
Whoever does that is harming his soul.

Do not take the Signs of God lightly,
but remember the goodness you have received from God
and what He has sent down to you for your edification
from the Scripture and Wisdom.
Fear God and know that God is aware of everything.

232.When you divorce your wives,
then, after they reach the term prescribed for them,
do not prevent them from marrying their [former] husbands
if they both agree on the usual terms.
This is an instruction for everyone

who believes in God and the Last Day —
this is clearer and purer for you.
God knows what you do not know!

233.Let mothers breast-feed their children two full years
if the father wants to complete this term.
His duty is to feed and clothe them as customary.
No soul should bear a burden greater than she can bear;
no mother should suffer because of her child,
and no father because of his child.
This applies to the father's heir as well.
If by mutual agreement the [parents] decide to wean early,
there will be no fault upon either of them.
There will be no fault upon you
if you decide to get a wet nurse for your children,
but by custom you must pay [her] the fee agreed upon.
Fear God and know that God sees everything you do.

234.If widows are left after one of you dies
let them wait four months and ten [days].
At the end of this period, it will not be sinful of them,
if they dispose of themselves according to custom.
God is well aware of everything you do.

235.You will not be blamed if you make a proposal
or if you conceive it in your soul:
God knows that you cannot abstain from [women].
Do not make them secret promises,
but speak, as required by custom.
And do not tie the marriage knot with them
until the prescribed term is over.
Know that God is aware of what is in your hearts.
Beware of Him and know
that God is forgiving and full of love!

236.There will be no fault upon you if you divorce wives
before touching them or determining their dower.
Make them [a gift] — the rich according to his means,
and the poor according to his means.
This is binding for the upright.
237*If you divorce them before consummation,
but after the dower has been agreed upon,
then half of the dower is theirs,
unless they relinquish it themselves
or it is relinquished by the one
who holds the [marriage] ties.
But to relinquish is nearer to righteousness.
Do not forget to be generous to each other.
Verily, God observes everything you do.

238.Attend to prayers, [especially] the mid[day] prayer
and stand reverently before God!
239.If you fear [the enemy], pray standing or on horseback;

and when the danger is over, remember God —
indeed, He is the One,
Who taught you what you did not know.

240.Those of you who might leave widows upon dying
should bequeath to their widows upkeep for a year.
But if they leave on their accord,
there will be no fault upon you
if they dispose of themselves according to custom.
God is mighty and wise!
241.Provide divorced women with the customary upkeep —
such is the duty of the God-fearing.
242.This is how God explains His Signs to you —
perhaps you will understand!

243*Didn't your sight turn to those who left their houses
fearing for their life? There were thousands of them!
God said to them:
— Let you die!
Then He brought them back to life.
Verily, God is full of mercy for man,
but most people are ungrateful.
244.So fight in the cause of God,
and know that God is hearing and all-knowing!

245.Who will give God a good loan,
which God will return multiplied many times?
God gives you either poverty or prosperity —
to Him is your return.

246*Have you not turned your sight
to the leaders of the Sons of Israel after Moses?
They said to their Prophet:
"Anoint us a King, and we'll fight in the cause of God!"
He said:
"And what if you refuse to fight
when required to go to battle?"
They said:
"How can we refuse to fight in the cause of God
after we've been chased away from our houses and children?"
But when they were ordered to fight,
they turned back, except a few of them.
God knows those who do wrong!
247*The Prophet said to them:
"God has appointed Talut as your King."
They said:
"How can he rule over us
if we've more rights to kingship than he;
moreover, he's not that wealthy!"
[The Prophet] said:
"God has chosen him over you
and has raised him in Knowledge and strength.
God bestows His power upon anyone He wills.
God is all-encompassing and all-knowing!"

248*And the Prophet also said:
"The Sign of his kingship is the coming to you of an Ark,
carried by Angels, with the Sakina of your Lord
and relics of the family of Moses and the family of Aaron.
There's a Sign for you in this if you believe."

249*Then Talut set out with [his] forces and said:
"God is going to test you by a river —
whoever drinks from it, isn't with me,
but whoever doesn't taste it, is with me;
and whoever scoops a little with his hand won't be counted."
They all drank from it, except a few.
When he and those who believed with him
crossed [the river], they said:
"Today We won't be able to cope with Djalut and his forces!"
But those who believed in the meeting with God, said:
"How many times with God's permission,
a small force has defeated a stronger one!
God is with those who endure!"
250.Advancing to meet Djalut and his armies, they said:
"O our Lord! Fill us with endurance, steady our feet,
and help us against the disbelievers!"
251.They prevailed, with God's permission,
and David killed Djalut.
God gave him kingship and wisdom,
and taught him everything He willed.
Had not God restrained people from one another,
the land would have been swamped with iniquity;
but God is full of Grace for the Worlds.

252.These are the Verses of God
which We recite to you in Truth.
Verily, you are one of the Messengers!

253*We have given preference to some Messengers over the others:
God spoke to some of them; others He raised in rank.

To Jesus, son of Mary, We gave the Proofs,
and We supported him by the Holy Spirit.
Had God so willed, the next generations
would not have fought among themselves.
But when the Proofs came to them,
they went separate ways: some believed
and others rejected the faith.
Had God so willed, they would not have fought one another,
but God does whatever He wills.

254.O you who have believed!
Contribute from the provisions We have given to you,
till the Day when there shall be no trade nor friendship,
nor intercession — those who rejected faith are sinners.

255*God! There is no god but Him.
He is the Living, the Existing!
Neither slumber nor sleep can overcome Him.
To Him belongs everything in the Heavens and earth!
Who can intercede for you before Him
without His permission?
He knows their past and their future,
but without His permission,
they cannot grasp a speck of His Knowledge!
His Throne extends over the Heavens and earth,
and He is not tired of caring for them.
He is the Exalted, the Great.

256*There is no compulsion in religion!
It is easy to tell righteousness from error.
Whoever rejects the idols and believes in God
leans onto the sturdiest support that nothing can break.
God is hearing and all-knowing!

257.God is the Protector of the believers.
He leads them out of darkness into the light,
but those who reject faith are sponsored by idols
who lead them out of the light into darkness.
They are the inmates of the Fire,
and they shall abide in it for ever.

258*Have you not turned your sight to the man
who argued with Abraham about his Lord
because God had given him power?
Abraham said:
"My Lord is the One, Who gives life and death!"
He said:
"I'm the one who gives life and death!"
Abraham said:
"God makes the sun rise from the east,
try to make it rise from the west!"
This confounded the disbeliever —
God does not guide the people who do wrong!

259*Or another example.
Someone passing by a ruined town with overturned roofs said:
"How can God bring back to life what has been destroyed?"
God caused him to die for a hundred years,
then He revived him and said:
— How long have you waited?
He said:
"A day or less."
[God] said:
— No, you have waited for a hundred years.
Look at your food and your drink: they have not changed.
Now, look at your donkey:
to let you become a Sign for the people, see how
We assemble his bones and cover them up with flesh.

After this was clearly demonstrated to him, he said:
"I know that God has power over everything!"

260*And Abraham said:
"O my Lord! Show me how You revive the dead."
[God] said: — Have you not believed yet?
He said:
"Yes, but reassure my heart."
[God] said:
— Take four birds and teach them to return to you,
then place them in pieces on different hills.
Call them, and they will hurry back to you!
Know that God is mighty and wise!

261. He who contributes of his wealth to the cause of God
is like a seed that produces seven ears
with a hundred grains in each ear.
God enriches anyone He wills —
God is boundless and all-knowing!
262. Those who spend of their wealth in the cause of God
and contribute without reproaches or insults,
shall receive their reward from their Lord;
they shall have no fear nor grief.

263. Kind words and forgiveness
are better than charity with abuse.
God is rich and full of love!

264. O you who have believed!
Do not depreciate your charitable acts
by reproaches and abuse like someone
who contributes of his property just to show off,
without believing either in God or the Last Day.
He is like a rock covered with soil:
rain will fall and wash it bare.
What they have earned will be in vain —
God does not guide the people who reject faith.
265. But those who contribute of their property,
seeking to please God and fortify their souls,
are like a garden on a high place.
A downpour will fall and double the crop,
and if not a downpour, then some dew will suffice —
God sees well all what you do.

266. Would not each of you like to have a garden
with rivers flowing under it,
with palm trees and vines, with fruit of all kinds?
What if old age comes and the children are still weak,
and suddenly a fire-bearing whirlwind alights
and sets it on fire?
This is how God makes the Signs clear to you —
perhaps you will reflect?

267.O you who have believed!
Contribute from the best of your possessions
and of from what We have grown for you on the land.
When you contribute, do not look for worthless things
that you would accept for yourselves only with closed eyes.
Let you know that God is rich and praiseworthy!
268.Satan threatens you with poverty
and calls you to indecency;
whereas God promises you His forgiveness and Grace.
God is limitless and all-knowing!
269.He grants wisdom to whom He wills,
and the one who is granted wisdom
receives an abundance of goodness.
But only those who have sense remember [it].

270.God knows about each of your contributions
and about each of your pledges.
And the wrong-doers will not have any helpers!

271.It is all right if you give alms in the open,
but it is better for you to do it in secret
and to give to the poorest;
this will atone for some of your sins —
God is well aware of what you do.

272. — [O Muhammad!]
It is not up to you to set [people] on the right path —
It is God Who sets on the right path anyone He wills.
Everything good you donate will benefit your souls,
but donate only while seeking the Face of God!
Whatever good you donate shall be returned to you in full,
and you shall not be treated wrongly.
273*All this is for the needy
who have devoted themselves to the cause of God,
but are unable to travel in the land.
They are so modest that the ignorant may think
that they are not in need.
But you recognize them by their mark:
they do not importune people, [begging] for help.
Verily, God is aware of whatever of value you give away.

274.Those who contribute of their wealth
by night or day, in secret or in public,
shall get a reward from their Lord,
and they shall neither fear nor grieve.

275.But those who feed on usury shall rise like those
whom Satan has driven to madness by his touch.
They say:
"Trade is like usury,"
although God has allowed trade and forbidden usury.
Those who abstain upon learning the prohibition
of their Lord shall have their past forgiven —

indeed, their case is in God's hands.
But those who relapse shall be the inmates of the Fire
to abide in it for ever.
276.God does not condone usury, but encourages almsgiving —
God does not love disbelieving sinners!

277.But those who have believed, have done good works, prayed,
and paid the zakat, their reward is with their Lord;
they shall neither fear nor grieve.

278.O you who have believed!
If you really believe, fear God
and give up your profit from usury.

279.If you do not do it, then may you know
that God and His Messenger
shall go to war against you.
But if you repent, you shall retain most of your property.
Do not oppress anyone — then nobody will oppress you.

280.If [a debtor] is in difficulty,
give him time to recover.
But it will be better for you
to remit out of charity,
if you [only] knew!

281.Beware of the Day when you shall be returned to God:
then every soul shall be paid what she earned,
and nobody shall be wronged.

282.O you who have believed!
If you contract a debt for a stated term, write it down.
Let a scribe record it faithfully for both sides.
and let him not refuse to write as God has taught [him].
Let the debtor himself dictate to him,
but let him fear God, his Lord,
and avoid reducing his debt by the least amount.
If the debtor is feeble-minded
or if he is in ill health, or unable to dictate,
then let his caretaker dictate, but in fairness.
Call in two of your men as witnesses
or, if two men are not available,
one man and two women from among those
whom you approve as witnesses.
If one makes a mistake, the other one will correct her.
When summoned, witnesses should not recuse themselves.

Do not neglect to write the term [of a transaction],
be it small or large as this is more equitable
in the sight of God, more authentic as evidence,
and more convenient to avoid doubt.
But if the transaction is done between you hand to hand,
you shall not be blamed for not writing it down.

Bargain with each other before witnesses,
but see that no harm is caused
to the scribe or to the witness.
If you cause [them harm],
it shall be a sinful act on your part.
Fear God! God teaches you —
indeed, God is aware of all things!

283.Deposits are in order when you are traveling
and cannot find a scribe,
but if one party trusts the other party with a deposit,
the one receiving the deposit should return it.
Let him fear God, his Lord,
and let him avoid concealing a testimony.
If anyone conceals it, his heart is really corrupt —
God knows all that you do.
284.To God belongs everything in Heavens and earth.
If you reveal or conceal what is in your soul,
God will bring you to account.
He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills.
God has power over all things.

285.The Messenger and the faithful believe in the Revelation
sent down to him from his Lord.
They all believe in God, in His Angels,
in His Scriptures, and in His Messengers.
[The faithful say]:
"We make no distinction between His Messengers."
They also say:
"We hear and we obey! Forgive us, o our Lord!
To You is [our] return!"

286.God does not burden any soul beyond her strength.
She earns something to her good,
and something to her harm.
[Say:]
"O our Lord! Don't condemn us
if we forget something or make a mistake.
O our Lord! Don't load us with the same burden
You've loaded on those who were before us.
O our Lord! Don't load us beyond our strength.
Overlook [our sins], pardon us and have mercy upon us —
You are our Sovereign indeed!
And help us against disbelieving people!"

V. 173: "Over which any name other than God's was invoked," or: "what has not been consecrated to God."

V. 177: A description of righteousness. "The wayfarers" or "those who fight for God" (cf. v.215). "In war" or "in calamity."

V. 178: "A balanced retaliation," — **qisas** — is the lawful vengeance, mitigated by the possibility of ransom (S.27:48).

V. 180-2: A more detailed legislation of inheritance is given in S.5:106-8. "According to custom" **(al-ma'ruf)** also means "in the accepted way," "honorably," "reputedly," "as required."

Islamic law is based on the Koran, tradition, and the **hadith** — a collection of a few hundred thousand sayings of the Prophet and his associates on a variety of social occasions.

V. 187: "They are a garment for you," meaning: they are for your comfort (lit.: "they are your covers"). "What God has prescribed to you" is the offspring of marriage.

V. 189: "Enter through the front door," figuratively, be open, straightforward.

V. 194: "Fear of God" **(taqawa)** is the highest virtue, the constant feeling of God's presence (S.88:24); the epithet "the God-fearing" **al-muttaqin** is met at every turn of the Koran; it can also been understood as "those who fear evil."

V. 196: Pilgrimage is the duty of every Muslim, but it depends on financial and other considerations listed in the Koran.

"An offering," probably an animal.

V. 197: The three months of pilgrimage — **Shawwal, Dhul-qa'da**, and **Dhul-hajj**, the latter meaning "[the month] of pilgrimage."

V. 198: Trade is allowed during pilgrimage.

V. 203: The last three days of pilgrimage — **tashrik**.

V. 213: The first Scripture was the Bible; clear Proofs came with the Koran, later on, but many Jews rejected them.

V. 222: Pollution and ailment are one word in Arabic.

V. 230: "[Irrevocably]," i.e., for a third time. "The limits of God" are the waiting periods and financial settlements.

V. 237: "Who holds the [marriage] ties," i.e., the husband.

V. 243: A reference to the expulsion of Muslims from Mecca.

V. 246: The Prophet in question is Samuel.

V. 247: **Talut** is the Biblical king Saul.

V. 248: **Sakina**, the Hebrew "shekhina," symbolizes the Spirit and the Presence of God. The Prophets who have "seen" God, Moses, for example, have not experienced God Himself, but His sakina. The "Ark" is the symbol of man's heart and soul.

V. 249. **Djalut** is Goliath. In the Bible the story of crossing the river is attributed to Gideon (Judges 7:4-7).

V. 253: It is Moses who has "spoken with God."

V. 255: Called "the verse of the Throne," **(ayat al-kursi)**, this remarkable verse is one of the best known of the Koran.

V. 256: Idols or "**taghut**" (S.39;17).

V. 258: The person who disputed with Abraham could have been Nimrod. However, identification of Koranic characters with Biblical characters is often problematic.

V. 259: The man is a stereotype of several Biblical figures.

V. 260: In another version of this story Abraham was told to place four birds on the hilltops instead of pieces of four birds, but then the strong image of miraculous revival is lost.

V. 273: To travel in order to make a living.

SURA 58 THE PLAINTIFF. ***This late sura, addressed directly to the Prophet, is without introduction or conclusion. It consists of four pronouncements on 1) the validity of pagan divorce, the so-called zihar (vv. 1-4); 2) the proper conduct of a Muslim in private and public life (vv. 5-13); 3) the conduct of disbelievers (vv. 14-20); and 4) the inevitable triumph of Islam (vv. 21-22).***

58. THE PLAINTIFF
Meccan, 22 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* — [O Muhammad!] God has heard the words of [the woman]
who petitioned you concerning her husband.
She complained to God,
and God listens to the arguments of both sides.
Verily, God is hearing and observing!

2* Some of you divorce their wives by the rite of zihar,
[calling them their mothers' spine].
But they are not their mothers!
Their mothers are those who gave them birth.
Of course, their words are offending and deceptive,
but, verily, God is relenting and forgiving!
3. Whoever divorces his wives by the rite of zihar,
and later on wants to go back on his words,
[should] free a slave before resuming relations —
this is prescribed for you.
God is well informed of [everything] you do.
4. If this is above his means, he should fast
two consecutive months before resuming relations.
If this is still too much for him,
let him feed sixty poor people.
This is to make you believe in God and His Messenger.
Such are the limits set up by God.
There will be a painful punishment for the disbelievers!

5. Verily, those who oppose God and His Messenger
shall be humiliated
like their predecessors have been humiliated.
Indeed, We had been sending down clear Signs in the past.
There will be a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers!

6. On the Day when God raises them all,
He will inform them of what they have done.
Indeed, God takes all into account,
but they have forgotten!
God is witness of all things.

7. Do you not see that God knows everything
in Heavens and earth?
Three people cannot meet in private

without [God] being the fourth;
or five people without Him being the sixth;
or a smaller or larger number
without Him being among them.
He is with them wherever they are.
Then, on Resurrection Day,
He will inform them of what they have done.
Verily, God is aware of everything.

8* Do you not see that those
who were forbidden to hold secret meetings
continue to do what has been prohibited?
They confer in private about sin,
enmity, and disobedience to the Messenger.
When they meet you, they greet you,
but not like God would greet you,
and say among themselves:
"Why doesn't God punish us for our words?"
Hellfire is sufficient for them,
and in it they shall burn.
What a bad destination!

9. O you who have believed!
When you confer in private, do not plot sin,
enmity, and disobedience to the Messenger,
but talk about virtue and fear of God.
Fear God: to Him is your return!
10. Private meetings are from Satan,
who wants to grieve the believers.
But he cannot harm them a bit without God's permission.
Let the believers put their trust in God!

11. O you who have believed!
If you are asked to make room at a meeting,
step aside, then God will make room for you.
If you are asked to stand up, stand up,
then God will elevate those of you
who have believed and received Knowledge.
God is well informed of everything you do.

12. O you who have believed!
Before consulting the Messenger in private,
give some alms: that will be better and purer for you.
But if you cannot do it,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
13. Or do you fear to spend on alms before the meeting?
If you did not give anything, and God forgave you,
then stand up to pray, pay the zakat,
and obey God and His Messenger.
God is well informed of everything you do.

14* Do you not see those who befriend the people
that incurred the wrath of God?

They are neither with you nor with them,
and they knowingly swear to falsehood.
15. God has prepared for them a grievous punishment.
Verily, evil are their deeds!

16. They use their oaths as a cover-up,
to turn [people] away from God's path.
There is a degrading punishment for them.
17. Neither wealth nor children
shall help them against God.
They are the inmates of the Fire,
and they shall abide in it for ever!
18. On the Day when God will raise them all,
they shall swear to God,
as they have been swearing to you.
They think that they stand on firm ground,
but in reality, they are liars!
19. Satan prevailed upon them and made them forget God.
They belong to the party of Satan,
but, verily, the party of Satan is bound to lose.

20. Verily, those who oppose God and His Messenger
shall be among the most humiliated.
21. God has decreed:
— I and My Messengers will prevail!
Verily, God is strong and almighty!

22. Among those who believe in God and the Last Day,
you will not find people
who love the enemies of God and His Messenger,
be they their fathers, sons, brothers, or relatives.
God will admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow — their everlasting abode —
only those in whose hearts He has inscribed faith
and whom He has fortified with a Spirit from Himself.
God is satisfied with them, and they are satisfied with Him.
They are the party of God,
and verily, the party of God shall succeed!

V. 1: Based on an actual case (Khaula vs. 'Aus ibn as-Samit).

V. 2: "You're like my mother's back" was the formula by which a pagan divorced, leaving his wife tied to the house as a slave.

V. 4: The Koran spells out in detail the conditions for legal marriage and divorce. Islamic marriage is a civil contract concluded by the bridegroom and the bride (or her legal guardian) before a judge (**qadi**) and witnesses. It is confirmed by the transfer of the dowry that was agreed upon to the bride. In some countries, the marriage is announced by a noisy parade of the newlyweds in the vicinity of their houses with a display of the gifts to the bride. It is illegal to marry a woman without her consent.

Divorce, which the Prophet used to call a necessary evil, is also described in detail in the Koran and sha'ria. There are two possibilities: dissolution of marriage on the basis of strict con-

ditions and waiting periods, and divorce based on mutual consent. In both cases the dowry remains with the divorced wife, and the parents must abide by certain definite rules concerning the upkeep and education of their children.

V. 8: Instead of saying **as-salamu 'aleik** (peace be upon you), they used to say **as-samu 'aleik** (poison be upon you).

V. 11: A Muslim must be polite with people, kind at home, reserved with strangers, respectful with the elderly, hospitable to the traveler and the needy, and honest in fulfilling his promises. He must scrupulously observe the traditions, for example, using his right hand for good deeds, greetings and eating, and his left hand for everything considered to be unclean.

Good manners demand the exchange of salutations with proper responses and pious expressions. It is rude, even insulting, to sit cross legged, turning the soles of one's shoes to the interlocutor, and it is especially ill-mannered to put one's feet on the table.

Whatever his status in society, a Muslim must behave in all occasions with self-respect. He is adverse to any laissez-faire and to any manifestation of light-mindedness. The pre-Islamic times are called the Times of Ignorance. People overcame ignorance when they received Knowledge and came to believe in Islam. Those who stay outside of Islam are "ignorant," whatever historical time they belong to. There is a strong conviction in the Muslim world that the Western countries have returned to the state of cultural ignorance and that their life is less enlightened than that of the ancient heathens.

V. 14: The "falsehood" is that the Jews would accept Islam.

SURA 4 (I) WOMEN. ***This lengthy late sura with numerous warnings and prescriptions is better read in separate parts.***

The first part deals with the following topics: 1) Proper conduct (vv. 15-18, 29, 32); 2) prayer (v.43); 3) justice (v.58), murder (v.29), betrayal, sedition (vv. 105-109, 114-115), and orphans (vv. 2-5, 8-10, 127); 4) marriage (vv. 3-4, 19-25, 34), divorce (vv. 35, 128-130), and inheritance (vv. 7-8, 11-13, 33); and 5) a criticism of the Jews (vv. 44-47).

The Koranic laws are interpreted and acted upon by Muslim jurists on the basis of the Arabic original of the Scripture, with reference to the hadith (sayings of the Prophet) and the commentaries of scholars. According to their understanding of the Law, Muslim scholars form several "schools," four of which are canonical.

Part II of the sura is on p. 482.

4. WOMEN
Medinan, 176 verses

PART I. VV. 1-60; 105-134

1* O people! Fear your Lord,
Who has created you from a single soul.
From her He has created a mate of like nature,
then He multiplied them
and dispersed them as men and women.

Fear God Whom [you invoke]
when you socialize with one another,
and [respect] the wombs [that have borne you].
Verily, God is watching over you.

2. Return their property to orphans
without replacing valuable items by worthless ones,
and do not consume their property
by absorbing it into your own.
Verily, this is a great sin.
3* If you fear to be unfair to female orphans,
then marry those who appeal to you, two, three,
or four, but if you fear to be unfair to them,
then [marry] only one or a slave —
that will be nearer to righteousness.
4* Leave their dower to the women as a gift.
But if they wish to return a part of it to you,
use it to your satisfaction.

5. Do not give to the feeble-minded the property
which God has consigned to you,
but use it to feed and clothe them.
And speak to them with kindness.

6. Examine orphans when they reach marriageable age.
If you find their judgment sound,
return to them their property.
And do not consume it in excess and in haste
before they have grown up.
Let a rich one show restraint [in remuneration],
and let a poor one get as much as allowed by custom.
Return the property in the presence of witnesses,
although God suffices for settling the account.

7. There is a share for men in the inheritance
left by parents and near relatives,
and there is a share for women in the inheritance
left by parents and near relatives.
Small or large, [everyone] has a definite share in it.
8. If other relatives, orphans, or the poor
take part in the distribution, give them their share
and treat them with kindness.
9. Let [the executors] fear, as they would fear
to leave after themselves an indigent posterity.
Let them fear God and speak appropriate words.

10. And those who wrongfully devour the property of orphans
are stuffing their bellies with Fire.
Soon they shall burn in the blazing Fire!

11* This is what God enjoins you
about your children's [inheritance].
To a son — the share of two daughters.
If there are two or more daughters,
their share is two-thirds of the inheritance.
If there is only one, her share is one half.
For the parents it is one sixth each

if [the deceased] has left children;
if there are no children
and the parents are the inheritors,
the mother gets one third.
If he has left children, the mother gets one sixth
after the payment of all obligations and debts.
You do not know who are closer to you in benefit,
your parents or your children, as God has decreed —
verily, God is all-knowing and wise!

12* Half of your wives' inheritance belongs to you
if they are childless, but if they have a child,
then your share is one-fourth
after the payment of all obligations and debts.
If you do not have a child,
[your wives'] share of inheritance is one-fourth.
If you have a child, their share is one-eighth
after the payment of all obligations and debts.

If the man or the woman who leaves an inheritance
has neither parents nor children
and if he [or she] has a brother or sister,
then the share of each of them is one-sixth.
But if there are more [of them],
then they share one-third
after the payment of any obligations and debts.
This is to avoid causing loss to [anyone].
Such is God's decree —
indeed, God is all-knowing and full of love!

13. Such are the limits of God.
He will usher into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow
those who obey God and His Messenger
to abide [there] for ever.
This will be a great success!

14. But those who disobey God and His Messenger
and transgress His limits
will be ushered into the Fire
to abide [there] for ever.
This will be a degrading punishment!

15* If your women have committed indecency,
call four witnesses from your midst.
If they confirm it, confine them to houses till they die,
or till God opens for them [another] way.

16. If two men among you are guilty of it,
punish them both,
but let them go if they repent and mend their ways.
Verily, God is relenting and merciful!

17. God accepts the repentance of those
who did evil out of ignorance and then quickly repented.
God relents towards them —
indeed, God is all-knowing and wise!

18. Repentance is not accepted from someone
who continues to commit evil
and says only in the face of death:
"Now, I repent,"
or from someone who died in disbelief.
We have prepared for them a painful punishment.

19. O you who have believed!
It is unlawful for you to inherit
women against their will.
If they are innocent of obvious indecency,
do not force them to return to you
even a part of what you have given to them.

Treat them according to custom.
If you hate them, then think
that God could have put much good in something you hate.
20* If you wish to replace one wife by another one,
do not take back even a bit
of what you have given [to the first one],
even if it is a qintar [of gold].
Would you like to take it back
by lying and doing a manifest wrong?
21. How can you take it back after you came into each other,
and gave a solemn pledge?

22. Do not marry women your fathers have been married to.
But what has passed, has passed.
Verily, it is indecent and repulsive — evil is that way!
23. Forbidden to you are your mothers, daughters, sisters;
your paternal and maternal aunts;
your brothers' and sisters' daughters;
your suckling nurses, your sisters in suckling;
the mothers of your wives;
the stepdaughters under your guardianship
from the wives you have been intimate with;
and if you have not been intimate with them,
then, you are not to be blamed.
Forbidden to you are the wives of your natural sons
and two sisters at the same time.
But what has passed, has passed.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
24* [Are also forbidden] married women, except your slaves.
Such is God's decree!
[Other women] are allowed to you on condition
that you will seek them by your means,
decently, and without lust.

If you have relations with them,
give them the compensation agreed upon.
You will not to be blamed if, after making a promise,
you change your promise by mutual consent.
Verily, God is all-knowing and wise!

25* If any one of you does not have the means
to marry free believing women,
he may [marry] your believing slaves.
God is well aware of your faith —
indeed, you are all from one another.
Marry them with their masters' permission
and give them their compensation according to custom.
Let them be chaste, not lustful,
and let them abstain from lovers.

If they commit indecency after marriage,
they shall get half the punishment given to free women.
This is for those of you who are afraid of sin;
but it is better for you to abstain.
God is forgiving and merciful!

26* God wants to give you clear instructions
to guide you in the customs of those
who lived before you and to forgive you.
God is all-knowing and wise!
27. God wants to forgive you,
but those who follow their passions
want to lead you far away.
28. God wishes to make it easy for you,
[indeed], man has been created weak!

29* O you who have believed!
Do not consume each other's property unjustly,
but engage in trade in a mutually profitable way.
Do not destroy yourselves —
verily, God is merciful to you.
30. And those who do it out of hostility and injustice,
We will soon cast them into the Fire —
easy it is for God!

31. If you avoid the most hateful transgressions
that have been forbidden to you, then We will free you
of evil and lead you through the Gate of honor.

32. And do not covet what God has bestowed
upon some of you more than upon the others.
Men shall receive according to their deeds,
and women shall receive according to their deeds,
so ask God for His favors!
Verily, God knows about all things!

33* For everyone We have designated heirs

to what is left by parents and near relatives.
Give their share to those
with whom you are tied by a sworn pledge.
Verily, God is witness to all things!

34* Men keep women in their care
because God gave an advantage to some over the others
and because they support them out of their means.
Upright women are obedient to God
and they guard the concealed that God protects.
As to those whose loyalty you doubt,
admonish them, avoid them in bed, and beat them;
but do not get at them if they start obeying you.
Verily, God is sublime and great!

35* If you fear a breach between two [spouses],
appoint referees —
one from his family and one from her family.
God will bring them back together
if they want to be reconciled.
Verily, God is all-knowing and well-informed!

36* Worship God and do not associate any partners with Him.
Be kind to [your] parents and relatives, to orphans
and the needy, to neighbors, related or unrelated to you,
to a close friend, to the traveler, and to your slaves.
Verily, God does not love the arrogant and the haughty,
37. the stingy ones who urge the others to stinginess,
and those who conceal the favors bestowed upon them by God.
We have prepared a shameful punishment for disbelievers
38* and those who spend of their wealth to show off before men,
but have no faith in God and the Last Day,
and for those who befriend Satan,
what a bad friend he is!

39. Why do they refuse to believe in God and the Last Day
and to contribute of what God has provided them with?
God knows everything about them —
40* God would not wrong anyone a bit.
And to the one who does goodness, He will double it
and will give a great reward from Himself.

41. What if We bring forth a witness from each community
and bring you, [o Muhammad!], as a witness against them?
42. On that Day, those who disbelieved
and disobeyed the Messenger
will wish to be leveled to the earth.
They cannot hide anything from God!

43. O you who have believed!
Do not start praying when you are intoxicated
and do not understand what you say;
or when you are polluted

and have not washed your whole body.
But if you are ailing or undertaking a journey,
or if you have relieved yourselves,
or if you have touched women and cannot find water,
then wash yourselves with clean soil,
rubbing your faces and hands with it.
Verily, God is relenting and forgiving!

44* Have you not seen those
who were given a part of the Scripture?
They are trading in error and want you to lose the way.
45. But God knows your enemies well.
Sufficient is God as a Protector,
sufficient is God as a Helper!

46* There are some among the Jews
who transpose words and say:
"We hear and disobey!"
"Hear the unhearable!" "Look at us!"
They revile religion by twisting their tongues!
It would be better and more becoming for them to say:
"We hear and obey!" "Listen!" "Take care of us!"
God has cursed them for their disbelief —
indeed, only a few of them have faith.

47. O you, who have received the Scripture!
Believe in what has been sent down by Us
as a confirmation of what you possess
before We disfigure your faces
by twisting them backwards; before We curse you,
as We used to curse the violators of the Sabbath!
God's Design shall be ever fulfilled!

48. God may forgive anything He pleases to anyone He pleases,
but He will not forgive association to Him.
An Associator to God is guilty of a great sin!

49. Have you seen anyone who purified himself [of sin]?
No! Only God purifies anyone He pleases,
and no one shall be wronged by the skin of a date stone.
50. See, how they invent lies against God —
indeed, this is a manifest sin!

51* Have you not seen those
who received a part of the Scripture?
They believe in witchcraft and idols
and say to the disbelievers
that they are better guided than the believers.
52. God has cursed them, and for those who have been cursed
by God, you shall not find any helper.
53. Even if they had a share in power,
they would not give a man even the skin of a date stone.
54* Or do they envy people

for what God has bestowed upon them of His favors?

We have given the Scripture and Wisdom
to the descendents of Abraham,
We have endowed them with a great power!
55* Some of them have believed in [God],
others turned away from Him.
Is there not enough Fire burning in Hell?

56. Soon We will cast in the Fire those who rejected Our Signs.
As their skin burns through, We will be replacing it
with fresh skin to give them a full taste of punishment.
Verily, God is mighty and wise!

57* We will soon admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow
those who have believed and have done good works,
to abide in them with their pure spouses for ever.
We shall lead them into the shadiest shade!

58. God commands you to return to their owners
whatever they have entrusted to you.
Be just when you judge between people.
Verily, excellent is what God teaches you!
Verily, God is hearing and seeing!

59. O you who have believed!
Obey God and obey the Messenger
and those among you who are in command.
If you disagree among yourselves about something
and if you believe in God and the Last Day,
then refer the matter to God and the Messenger —
such a resolution is the best and the most fitting!

60. Have you not seen those who profess their belief
in what has been sent down to you and before you,
and yet prefer to seek the judgment of idols,
even though they were commanded to disavow them —
Satan leads them far astray!

V. 61-104: see S.4 (II), p. 482.

105* We have sent down to you the Scripture with the Truth
to let you judge between the people as instructed by God.
Do not intercede in behalf of the traitors,
106. but ask for God's forgiveness.
Verily, God is all-forgiving and merciful!

107. Do not intercede for those who betray their souls!
Verily, God does not love the traitors and the sinners.
108. They can hide from people, but they cannot hide from God!
He is among them when they hold the nightly palavers
that He does not condone —

indeed, God encompasses everything they do.
109. You may intercede for them in this life,
but who will intercede for them before God
on Resurrection Day? Who will be their trustee?

110. Whoever does evil or wrongs his soul
and then asks for God's forgiveness,
will find that God is forgiving and merciful.
111. But whoever accumulates sins is hurting himself —
indeed, God is knowing and wise!
112. Whoever commits an error or a sin
and then blames it on an innocent person,
is guilty of slander and brazen sin.

113. — [O Muhammed!] Had it not been for the favors of God
to you and His mercy, a band of them would have surely
conspired to lead you astray.
But they cannot injure you in the least
without leading astray their own souls.
God has sent down to you the Scripture and the Wisdom
and taught you what you did not know.
Indeed, great is God's Grace for you!

114. There is nothing good in many of their secret palavers.
If any one of them urges to alms-giving,
to honorable conduct, or to peace between men,

and does it to please God,
We will give him soon a great reward.
115. But whoever, after receiving the clear Guidance,
repudiates the Messenger
and strays from the way of the believers,
We will abandon him astray on the path he has chosen
and burn him in Hell. Evil will be this outcome!

116. Verily, God does not forgive associating with Him,
but He forgives other offenses to anyone He wills.
Whoever associates with God is far astray in error.
117. Whom do they call to besides Him? —
Some female [idols] or Satan, the rebel
118. cursed by God, who said:
"I'll surely take some of your servants for myself,
119* I'll surely lead them astray and fill them with lust.
I'll inspire them to slit the ears of cattle
and thus to tamper with God's creation!"

Whoever takes Satan as protector instead of God,
will surely suffer a manifest loss.
120. Satan makes them promises and fills them with passions,
but his promises are mere delusions.
121. Their abode shall be Hell
from which they will not find a way to escape.

122. But those who have believed and did good,
We shall soon admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide in them for ever.
God's promise is true,
and are there words more truthful than God's?

123. Your wishes shall not come true
like the wishes of the People of the Scripture.
Whoever does evil shall receive the same in return,
and he shall not find any protector or helper besides God.

124. But men and women who do good and believe,
shall enter Paradise and shall not be wronged
by the skin of a date stone!
125. Who is better in religion than the one
who fully surrenders to God, does good works,
and follows the creed of Abraham, the Hanif?
Indeed, God had taken Abraham for a friend.
126. [Everything] in Heavens and earth belongs to God,
and God encompasses all things.

127* They ask you to make a pronouncement about women.
Say:
"God gives you a pronouncement about them in the Book
and instructs you about the female orphans
whom you wish to marry, but to whom you don't give
the prescribed compensation;
and also about defenseless children.
This is to make you treat the orphans equitably.
The moment you do something good,
verily, God is already aware of it!"

128. If a woman fears duress or abandonment
on the part of her husband,
there shall be no blame upon both of them
if they reach a settlement.
A settlement is the best thing!

Greed lives in everyone's soul,
but if you do good deeds and fear God...
God is well aware of your deeds!

129* You would never be equally just to all [your] wives,
even if you eagerly wanted to be!
But do not abandon [any of them] completely,
leaving her without support.
If you reach a settlement and fear God,
then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful!
130. But if the two separate, God will enrich them both
out of His abundance, for God is limitless and wise!

131. To God belongs everything in Heavens and earth!
We have guided those who received the Scripture before you

as well as yourselves to make you fear God.
If you deny God, verily,
everything in Heavens and earth [still] belongs to God.
God is rich and praiseworthy!
132. Indeed, everything in Heavens and on earth belongs to God,
and God is sufficient as a Protector.

133. O people!
If such is His will, He would remove you
and replace you by others —
indeed, this is in the power of God!
134. And if someone desires the reward in this world,
surely, the reward is with God
in this world and in the Hereafter.
God is all-hearing and all-seeing!

V. 1: "Who created you from a single soul." The modernistic interpretation "who created you from a single cell" (AA) is hardly suitable in the Koran.

V. 3: New rules concerning marriage were needed because of the large number of ruined families and orphans during the wars and migrations, especially after **Uhud** (3 H). Marrying off orphan girls was a social need. The slaves are "those held in your right hands."

V. 4: Dowers or dowries are a compensation paid by men to their brides (S.2:236). In those times women did not pay dowries to their husbands, as usual in modern cultures, the Muslim ones included, but the husbands "bought" wives for the dowries they paid.

V. 11: "You do not know which are more useful to you: your parents or your children." There is a variant: "you do not know to whom your inheritance will be more useful, to your parents or to your children."

V. 12: It could have been followed by v.176 (S.4,II p. 605).

V. 15: The ruling may apply to lesbians.

V. 20: A **qintar** — a hundred pounds.

V. 24: This verse does not condone adultery. Simply, during religious wars all previous civil ties between the captives, including marriage, were void.

V. 25: "Free" women, lit., women "under somebody's care," i.e., belonging to a reputable family or living with it.

"You are all from one another," or "you are [all] one nation," is an emphatic renouncement of ethnic or racial prejudice.

V. 26: Muslims believe that the oral Revelations to the Prophets and the three written Scriptures, the Bible, the Evangel, and the Koran form together one Reminder, one Truth, obvious to those who possess Knowledge. Therefore, to deny the Koran is to deny the whole Prophetic tradition and with it the belief in one God.

Islam does not exclude from Heaven those who led exemplary lives without ever hearing about the Koran. In contrast, Christians hold that baptism is a necessary condition to be saved. Muslims think that even though Truth is absolute, it can be reached in many ways. Therefore, there is no need for destroying foreign cultures and religions and desecrating their monuments. All monuments are valuable because God has allowed their creation and has let them stand for ages. Even the heathen idols can be spared because they cannot hurt the established religions. More hurtful for Islam are the ***cults*** and movements like the Taliban in Afghanistan, con-

trived by fanatics bent on destroying Hindu temples, churches and synagogues. Equally reprehensible are the Christian extremists who have destroyed objects of art in ancient Egypt and in America.

V. 29: "Do not destroy yourselves" may be a warning against suicide or spiritual suicide, or homicide in general.

V. 33: A sworn pledge might refer to obligations in marriage, as well as to family and social relationships.

V. 34: "They guard the concealed that God protects," i.e., the couple's reputation.

"Beat them." Some critics of Islam see in this verse a licence for husbands to violate the human rights of their wives. Muslim scholars argue that beating of wives is made unnecessary by the call in the next verse for a family arbitration in marital disputes (cf. vv.125-129).

V. 35: According to Islamic jurisprudence, the judge must be a man with Knowledge, a **'alim**, and not necessary a theologian. He must base his decisions on the three disciplines: **idjma'** (common law), **qias** (comparative law) and **idjtihad** (use of reason).

V. 36: "The traveler" or "the follower of the [right] way."

V. 38: "Who takes Satan as a friend." This companion is the double of the opposite sex, the qarin or qarina (S.49:25).

V. 40: All sins may be forgiven, except association to God.

V. 44: Those who have received a part of the Scripture are the Jews and the Christians.

V. 46: Obviously, one cannot convey in English the word-play based on the mispronunciation of Arabic and Hebrew words.

In several verses of this sura God "curses" the disbelievers. By this strong expression the Koran means that God rejects the sinners for rejecting Him.

V. 51: "They believe in sorcery and idols," lit., "in **Jibt** and **Taghut**. The latter are the names of two idols (S.2:256).

S.113 deals with sorcery (blowing on knots while pronouncing some imprecations), but it must be understood on the spiritual level: the knots are the evil acts that disrupt the peace of the soul, and the women who blow on the knots are the human passions that cause the disruption.

V. 54: The people who have received the favors of God are the Muslims, the rightful descendants of Abraham.

Vv. 55f: An admonition to the Jews.

V. 57: "The pure spouses," as in S.2:25.

V. 105: About a case in which the Prophet acquitted a Jew unjustly accused by a Muslim.

V. 119: Cutting the ears of consecrated animals was a pagan custom, and so was the mutilation of slaves. The Muslims believe that it is sinful to alter God's creatures. One can see in this attitude a call to respect the environment.

V. 127: A clarification of the treatment due to women and children who are deprived of family support.

V. 129: The first sentence of this verse is considered to be a justification of monogamy.

SURA 22 THE PILGRIMAGE. ***S. 22 is complex, combining Warning, Sign, and Say passages with references to food (vv. 30-37), animal sacrifices (vv. 36-37), prayer (v.35), contributions (vv. 41, 78), pilgrimage (vv. 27-33), rites (vv. 34, 67), the possibility of changes in the Koran (vv. 52-55), retaliation (v.60), sedition (vv. 3-4, 11-13, 19-25), attitude toward Jews and Christians (vv. 17, 19, 67-70), and Holy War (vv. 39-40, 58).***

S.22 is not only complicated in content, it is also "mixed": some of its verses are early Meccan and others — late Medinan.

22. THE PILGRIMAGE
Medinan, 78 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. O people! Fear your Lord!
Verily, the commotion of the [Last] Hour
shall be a mighty event!
2. On the Day when you see it,
every breast-feeding woman shall forget whom she feeds
and every pregnant woman shall drop her burden.
You shall see people acting drunk without being drunk,
[you shall see] how strong is God's wrath.

3* There are people who argue about God without knowledge.
They follow every rebellious Satan
4. about whom it is written that if anyone befriends him,
he will make him lose the way
and will lead him to the punishment by the Fire.

5. O people!
You doubt the Resurrection, but We have created
you first from dust, then from a seed drop,
then from a blood clot, and then from a piece
of partly formed and partly formless flesh
to make [Our power] manifest to you!
We keep in the wombs what We will for a set time,
then We bring you forth as infants
and let you grow to maturity.
Some of you will die [young],
and some will approach the feeble age
when man forgets all he had known before.
You see how barren the earth can be,
but as soon as We pour water upon it, it stirs and swells,
and produces all kinds of handsome pairs.

6. This is because God is the Truth.
He revives the dead and has power over all things.
7. There is no doubt that the Hour is near,
and that, verily, God will raise
those who inhabit the graves.

8. Some people argue about God without Knowledge
or Guidance, or an enlightening Scripture.

9. Disdainfully turning away,
they lead astray from the way of God.
Shame on them in this life!
On Resurrection Day We will make them taste
the punishment of the Fire:
10. — This is for you, for what your hands have sent forth!
Verily, God will not be unjust to His servants.

11* Among those who serve God there are people who waver.
When something good comes their way, they are elated,
but as soon as they are put to test,
they turn their faces away.
Thus they waste both this life and the Hereafter —
this is an obvious loss.
12. They call on something besides God
that can neither harm nor benefit them:
this is how far they have gone astray!
13. They worship someone who harms more than assists,
who is a bad protector and a bad companion.

14. Verily, God will admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow
those who have believed and done good works.
Verily, God does what He wills!
15* And if someone thinks that God will not help [the Prophet]
in this life and in the Hereafter,
let him stretch a rope to the sky and then cut it off,
and see if his trick abates whatever enrages [him].

16. We have sent down [the Koran] in clear Verses.
Verily, God guides anyone He wills.
17* On Resurrection Day God will judge between the believers
and the Jews, Sabeians, Christians, Magi, and Associators.
Verily, God is witness to all things!

18. Do you not see that everything in Heavens and earth
bows down in worship before God: the sun, the moon,
the stars, the hills, the trees,
the beasts, and a multitude of people.
Yet many of them deserve to be punished.

Whoever God has abased will never raise in dignity.
Verily, God does whatever He pleases!

19. Two opposing parties argue about their Lord.
Garments of Fire shall be cut for the disbelievers,
and their heads shall be doused with boiling water
20. that will melt their innards and skins.
21* Iron maces for them!
22. Each time they try to get away from suffering,
they shall be returned into it:
— Taste the punishment by the Fire!

23. Verily, God will admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow
those who have believed and have done good works.
They shall be adorned therein with golden bracelets
and pearls, and garments of silk.
24. Indeed, they have been guided to the good Word,
they have been guided to the path of the Praiseworthy!
25* But those who disbelieved and turned [others]
away from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque,
which We have opened to all people —
the local residents and the nomads as well, —
and those who defile it and do evil in it,
We will make them taste a painful punishment.

26* We gave Abraham the site of the [Sacred] House,
saying to him:
— Do not associate anything with Me
and sanctify My House for those
who walk around it, stand in it,
bow, and prostrate themselves.

27. Announce the pilgrimage to the people.
Let they come to you on foot or on lean [camels]
emerging from every deep mountain gap
28* to witness the favors that they have been granted,
to invoke on certain days the name of God
over the cattle He gave them,
and then to eat it and feed the unfortunate poor.
29* Then let them spruce themselves up,
complete their vows,
and walk around the Ancient House.
30. Let it be so!
Indeed, whoever respects the rites of God
is commendable in his Lord's sight!
[During pilgrimage] you are allowed meat,

but not the one prohibited to you.
Avoid the pollution of idols and deceiving words.

31. Be [like] Hanifs before God
and do not associate to Him.
Whoever associates to God is like someone
who fell from the sky or was snatched by birds,
or was blown by the wind to a remote place.
32* And so it is!
Respect for the rites of God
truly comes from the devotion of the hearts.

33. [Cattle] is useful to you till a certain time,
and then their place is near the Ancient House.
34. We have set up devotional rites for every community
to let them pronounce the name of God
over the cattle that He has given them.
Your God is one God, so surrender to Him!

— And you, [o Muhammad!],
announce the good news to the humble [people]
35. whose hearts fill with awe at the mention of God.
They patiently bear their afflictions,
observe the prayer, and contribute
from what We have given to them.

36. We have made for you sacrificial camels
for performing the rites of God and to be useful to you.
So pronounce the name of God over them
when they are lined up for sacrifice.
And after they fall on their sides, eat their meat
and feed those who beg with restraint and humility.
This is how We have subjected [the cattle] to you —
perhaps you will be grateful!

37. Neither their flesh nor their blood will reach God —
it is your devotion that will reach Him.
He has subjected them to you,
so glorify God for His Guidance
and announce the good news to those who do good!
38. God will protect those who have believed,
but verily, God does not love the traitors
and those who have no faith.

39. Those who are attacked are allowed [to fight back] —
indeed, they have been treated unjustly!
Verily, God has the power to help those

40. who have been unlawfully expelled from their houses
only for their words:
"Our Lord is God."

If God had not protected some people from the others,
then monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques,
where the name of God is often pronounced,
would have certainly been destroyed.
God will help those who help Him,
for, verily, God is powerful and all-mighty!
41. Indeed, they belong to those who,
when We settle them in the land,
observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
urge to the reputable, and forbid evil.
In God is the conclusion of [all] affairs!
42. — And if they reject you, [o Muhammad!],
others have been rejected before
by the peoples of Noah, 'Ad, and Thamood,
43. by the people of Abraham, the people of Lot,
44. and the dwellers of Madyan.
Moses had been rejected [too].
I gave a respite to the disbelievers
and then I seized them — so great was My indignation!

45. How many towns have We have turned upside down
in the midst of their wrong-doing!
We destroyed them to their foundations
[together] with many wells and mighty castles.
46. Why do their hearts fail to understand
and their ears fail to hear
when they travel in the land?
Insensitive are not their eyes,
but the hearts in their chests.
47. They ask you to hurry up with punishment,
but God will not break His promise.
Verily, one Day with your Lord
is like a thousand years by your reckoning.
48. And how many towns have I respited
in the midst of their wrong-doing!
Then I seized them — indeed, to Me is the return!
49. Say:
"O people! I'm your clear Warner!"
50. For those who have believed and have done good works,
there will be forgiveness and a generous provision.
51. But those who try to belittle our Verses
shall be the inmates of the blazing Fire.

52* And before you, when We sent a Messenger or a Prophet
with the intent of bringing a revelation,
Satan threw [something of his own] into his intent.
But God canceled whatever Satan threw in
and confirmed His Verses — indeed, God is knowing and wise!

53. Of the suggestions thrown in by Satan,
[God] makes a test for those whose hearts are diseased,
whose hearts are hardened.
Verily, the wrong-doers are deeply alienated!
54. Let those who have been given Knowledge
realize that [the Koran] is the Truth from your Lord.
Let them believe in Him, and let their hearts open to Him.
Verily, God guides the believers to the straight path.

55. The disbelievers shall continue to doubt
until the Hour suddenly comes upon them,
and they are hit by the punishment of Devastation Day.
56. On that Day all power shall be with God, and He will judge
between them. For those who believed and did good works —
the Gardens of Bliss,
57. and for those who disbelieved
and rejected Our Signs — a humiliating punishment.
58. God will surely give a good provision to those
who have been exiled in the cause of God
and then were killed or died.
Verily, God is the best of providers!
59. Verily, He will lead them to the entrance
that will be to their liking.
Verily, God is all-knowing and forbearing!

60. And if someone retaliates in kind,
and then is treated harshly, God will surely help him.
Verily, God is exonerating and ever-forgiving!

61. God merges the night with the day
and merges the day with the night.
Verily, God is hearing and observing!
62. God is the Truth, and what they are calling to
besides Him is falsehood!
Verily, God is the Lofty, the Great.

63. Do you not see how the earth turns green
when God pours water from the sky?
Verily, God is gracious and well informed!
64. Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to Him.
Verily, God is the Wealthy, the Praiseworthy.

65. Do you not see that God has subjected to you
everything on earth, including the ships
that sail in the sea by His command?
He supports the sky to keep it from falling
upon the earth without His permission.
Verily, God is kind and merciful to man!
66. He is the One, Who gave you life,
Who will cause you to die,
and Who will bring you back to life.
But verily, how ungrateful is man!

67. We have established for each nation
the rites they ought to observe.
Do not let anyone argue with you about them,
but call to your Lord.
Verily, you are on the right path!
68. And if they argue with you, say:
"God knows best everything you do,
69. and God will judge your differences
on Resurrection Day."
70. Do you not know that God is aware
of everything in Heaven and earth?
Indeed, everything is in the Book —
verily, this is simple for God!

71. Besides God they worship [idols]
for which they have not received any authority,
and about which they have no knowledge.
The sinners shall not have any helper!

72. When Our clear Proofs are recited to the disbelievers,
you see in their faces that they reject them!
They are even ready to assault
those who recite Our Verses.

Say:
"Shall I announce to you something worse?
Worse is the Fire that God has promised to the disbelievers.
What a bad outcome it will be!"

73. O people! Listen to this example:
the ones you are calling to besides God
are not able to create a fly, even if they joined forces,
or even to retrieve what a fly has snatched from them,
Weak is the petitioner, and weak is the petitioned one.

74. They do not value God at His true value.
Verily, God is strong and powerful!

75. God chooses Messengers from among the Angels and men.
Verily, God is hearing and observing!
76. He knows what was before them
and what will be after them.
All matters return to God.

77. O you who have believed!
Bow, prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord!
And do good works — perhaps you will succeed!
78* Fight in His cause an honorable fight.
He chose you and gave you a burden-free religion.
Such was the faith of your father Abraham.
Now, as before, [God] is calling you Muslims.
His Messenger is your witness,
and you are witnesses for the people.

So observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and hold onto God, your Protector.
What an excellent Protector,
what an excellent Helper He is!

V. 3: Against an enemy of the Prophet, Abu Jahl (cf. v.9).

V. 11: "On the edge," lit., "on a blade."

V. 15: This verse can be understood in different ways: 1) is "him" the Prophet or the reprobate? 2) the **sama**' might be the sky or "the ceiling"; 3) was ***he*** cut off, or the rope?

"Let him stretch a rope to the ceiling, then let him cut [it] off (MHS),

"Let him hook a rope onto the sky and strangle himself" (GSS).

The rope stretched to the sky is a common trick among Persian magicians and Indian fakirs.

V. 17: With those whom God will judge are listed the Magi and the Associators. According to the Koran, even the pagans are to appear before Him if they are sincere in their faith.

V. 21: "Iron maces," or shepherd's staffs or hooks.

V. 25: The nomads are the Bedouins of S.49:14-17.

V. 26: Abraham's site is beside the Ka'ba in Mecca (S.2:125).

V. 27: "Pilgrimage" is **hajj** in Arabic.

V. 28: The fixed days — the first ten days of the month of pilgrimage **(Dhul-hajj)**. Among the favors are the receipts of licit trade the pilgrims might be engaged in.

V. 29: Pilgrims are expected to shave, clip their nails, and keep their bodies clean.

V. 32: The marked cattle: the animals kept for sacrifices.

V. 52f: God can correct the Koranic Verses to replace those which were inspired by Satan (S.13:39).

V. 78: "A burden-free religion" — in opposition to Christianity, Islam does not demand humility and retreat from life, and redemption from an original sin for which man is not responsible.

SURA 65 DIVORCE. ***This short sura, aimed through the Prophet at the whole community, completes in its first six verses the legislation of divorce that was promulgated in S.2.***

65. DIVORCE
Medinan, 12 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* O Prophet! When you divorce women,
divorce them during the term prescribed for them
and compute the prescribed time correctly.
Fear God, your Lord,
and do not expel them from their houses.
They themselves should not leave either,
unless they are guilty of flagrant indecency.
Such are the limits of God, and whoever transgresses
the limits of God does wrong to his soul.
Perhaps God will give this matter a new turn!

2. When they reach their term,
retain them equitably or part with them equitably.
Call two just [people] from your midst as witnesses
and testify before God.
This Admonition is for anyone
who believes in God and the Last Day.
God will find a way out for the one who fears God,
3. and provide for him from unexpected sources.
God is sufficient for any one who trusts Him.
Verily, God will fulfill His purpose.
Verily, everything has a measure with God!

4* If you have any doubts,
the prescribed term is three months
for those of your women who have stopped expecting menses,
and also for those who have not had their menses yet.
For pregnant women, their term is at delivery.
God will make his commands easy for the God-fearing.
5. Such is God's Design,
which He has sent down to you.
He will free the God-fearing of evil
and will increase his reward.

6. Lodge [women during the waiting period]
where you live and according to your means.
Do not harass them to make their life difficult;
if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver.
If they are breast-feeding your [child],
pay them their dues and consult with them in good faith.
If you disagree, [leave] breast-feeding to another woman.

7. Let a man of means spend from his wealth
and let a man in want spend from what God has given him.
God will not burden any soul
with more than what He has assigned to her;
indeed, soon after hardship God brings you relief.

8. How many towns have rebelled against the commands
of their Lord and His Messengers!
We called them to strict account
and inflicted upon them a severe punishment.
9. They tasted the evil of their deeds,
and their deeds led them to losses.
10. God has prepared a harsh punishment for them!

O people with sense and faith, fear God!
Indeed, God has sent down to you a Reminder
11. and a Messenger who recites to you the clear Verses of God
to bring those who believed and did good works
out of darkness into the light.
And those who believed in God and did good works,
He will admit into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide in them for ever.
What an excellent provision God bestows upon them!

12* God is the One, Who has created seven heavens
and the earth in the same number!
His commands descend between them
to let you know that God has power over everything,
and that God's Knowledge encompasses all things.

V. 1: The words "God will give this matter a new turn" open the possibility for reconciliation.

V. 4: "Those who did not have their menses yet" — in those days, some girls were given in marriage at a very young age.

V. 12: Seven is a mystical number. The seven skies are the seven levels of spiritual growth corresponding to the seven planets known in those times. The seven earths are the levels of righteousness, corresponding to the implied geological strata of the earth.

SURA 66 PROHIBITION. ***A short sura defending the Prophet from slander. One of his wives, Hafsa, saw him with his Coptic consort, Mariam, and reported it to another wife, 'A'isha. Hence, the lesson: women should not bother their husbands with jealousy and petty squabbles.***

66. *PROHIBITION*
Medinan, 12 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* O Prophet!
Why, in order to please your wives,
do you deprive yourself
of what God has made lawful for you?
God is forgiving and merciful!

2* God has made it lawful for you all
to dissolve your oaths.
God is your Protector —
He is the Knowing, the Wise.

3* After the Prophet told a secret
to one of his wives,
she reported it [to another one],
and God made him aware of that.
He told her a part of it
and kept silent about the rest.
When he disclosed it to her, she said:
"Who told you that?"
He said:
"The Knowing, the Well-Informed."

4* If you both repent before God,
then your hearts are inclined to it,
but if you conspire against [your husband],
then, verily, God is his Protector
and Gabriel, and the upright among the believers,
and the Angels will all lend him their support!

5* If he divorces you,
his Lord will replace you by better wives —
widows and virgins who submitted themselves to God,
who believe and are devout, who repent and worship God,
who go on pilgrimage and keep the fasts.

6. O you who have believed!
Save yourselves and your families from the Fire,
which will be fueled by men and rocks!
It is controlled by tough and powerful Angels.
who are committed to enforcing God's orders
and to acting as commanded. [They will say:]
7. "O you who haven't believed!
Don't make excuses on this Day!
Verily, you shall be punished for what you have done!"

8* O you who have believed!
Repent to God sincerely

and hope that God will absolve you
from your sins and usher you into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow.
On that Day God will not allow to humiliate the Prophet
and those who believe with him.
Light shall shine forward from them
and from their right hands. They will say:
"O our Lord!
Bring our Light to perfection and forgive us!
Verily, You have power over all things!"

9* O Prophet!
Fight the disbelievers and the Hypocrites
and be tough with them!
Their dwelling shall be Hell — what an awful outcome!

10* God gave to the disbelievers the examples
of the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot.
Both were married to two of Our upright servants
and both betrayed them.
Nothing could help them with God and they were told:
— Enter the Fire with those who enter [it]!

11* God gave to the believers the example
of Pharaoh's wife, who said:
"O my Lord! Build me a house near You in Paradise
and deliver me from Pharaoh and his deeds,
deliver me from the people who do wrong!"

12* And Mary, the daughter of 'Imran,
who kept herself chaste...
We breathed into her from Our Spirit,
and she believed in the Words of her Lord
and in His Scriptures.
She was one of those who feared God.

V. 1: The Prophet Muhammad had nine wives. Of these, the daughter of Abu Bakr, 'Aisha, and the daughter of 'Omar, Hafza, were literate. He also had several concubines: one of them, Raihana, was a former slave and the other, Mary or Mariam, was Christian. His two boys (by Hadidja) died in infancy.

Details about the personal life of the Prophet may seem to be out of place in the Koran. However, they are in the spirit of the Holy Book because they are a pretext for a practical lesson about family ties and responsibilities that still ought to be upheld in modern society.

V. 2: An oath may be void if it interferes with righteousness or if it concerns a trivial matter (cf. S.5:91).

V. 3: The principle is more important than the details of the gossip about which the Prophet kept silent. The sura teaches that domestic problems should be resolved with love and tact.

V. 4: It is not enough to believe: man must also earn his righteousness by his own deeds (S.7:147).

V. 5: "Who go on pilgrimage" or "who travel."

V. 8: For the mystic interpretation of Light, see S.24:35f.

V. 10: There is nothing in the Bible about the wife of Noah being unfaithful to her husband.

V. 11: The reference should be to the daughter of Pharaoh and not to his wife.

V. 12: Mary, daughter of 'Imran, is Jesus's mother. "We breathed into her from Our Spirit" or "We breathed into her [body] from Our Spirit"

The whole sura deals with good breeding, courtesy, politeness, [**adab**], which are considered serious matters in Islam. "Adab" covers dignified behavior, respecting clansmen and foreigners, granting asylum, visiting the sick and avoiding rough language.

Good manners are the object of an elaborate code of ethics that also covers respect for one's body. This code prescribes cleanliness and teaches to have more respect for the right side of the body than for the left side: thus, the right hand is for eating, writing, and greeting, and the left hand is for less dignified actions. Politeness requires that a meal or at least coffee be offered to a visitor and that he be allowed to relax and feel himself at home before starting a business conversation. Tidiness, modesty, and composure require that women dress conservatively and cover their hair with shawls. Country women wear long black attire and veils covering their faces when they go outside their property or their fields. Such customs are part of the social culture of Muslim people.

SURA 24 THE LIGHT. ***S.24 owes its name to a remarkable mystical passage, "God is the Light of the Heavens and the earth..." (vv. 35-44).***

The other topics of the sura are: proper conduct (vv. 21-22, 26-33, 58-63), respect for the Prophet (vv. 58-59, 62-63), prayer (v.56), support of the destitute (vv. 22, 61), obedience to God (vv. 47-54), sedition and slander (vv. 11-20, 23-25, 47-52), marriage (vv. 26, 32-33), and adultery (vv. 2-10, 26).

24. THE LIGHT
Medinan, 64 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. We have descended this sura and made it a law.
We have descended it in clear Verses —
perhaps you will remember!

2* Flog an adulterer and an adulteress a hundred lashes.
If you believe in God and the Last Day,
do not let pity prevent you
from carrying out God's prescription.
And let some believers witness their punishment.

3* An adulterer is allowed to marry
only an adulteress or an Associator.
And an adulteress is allowed to marry
only an adulterer or an Associator.
This is forbidden to believers.

4. Flog eighty lashes those who accuse decent women
without producing four witnesses,
and do not accept their testimony ever again —
indeed, they are reprobates,
5. except those who repent and mend their ways.
Verily, God is all-forgiving and merciful!

6. Whoever accuses his wives
and cannot produce any witness other than himself,
must call God to witness four times
that he is telling the truth.
7. And the fifth time he will call upon himself
the curse of God if he is telling a lie.

8. Punishment shall be withheld from [the wife]
if she calls God to witness four times that he is a liar.

9. The fifth time she will call on herself
the wrath of God if he is telling the truth.
10. If it were not for the Grace of God to you and His mercy...
but, verily, God is relentful and wise!

11* Verily, those who slander you are from your midst!
Do not think that it can harm you —
on the contrary, it is to your advantage.
Indeed, each of [the slanderers] will get
what he deserved for this sin,
and the one who assumed the greater part of it
shall receive a mighty punishment.
12. When you heard about it, how is it that you,
believing men and women, did not think of goodness and say:
"This is an obvious slander!"
13. And why have they not produced four witnesses?
Indeed, if they have not produced witnesses,
then they are liars before God.
14. Had it not been for the favors of God towards you
and His mercy in this world and the Hereafter,
a mighty punishment would have landed upon you
for making [a false rumor] public.
15* You picked up on your tongues
and you said with your mouths what you did not know.
You think that it is a trifle,
yet it is serious in the eyes of God.
16. When you heard it, why did you not say:
"It isn't proper for us to talk about that.
Glory to You! This is a monstrous slander!"
17. God directs you to never do it again as long as you believe.
18. God makes the Signs clear to you — God is knowing and wise!

19. Verily, there is a painful punishment
in this world and in the Hereafter
for those who spread gossip among the believers.
God knows, and you do not know.

20* Were it not for the favors of God and His mercy to you...
God is kind-hearted and merciful!

21. O you who have believed!
Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan.
Anyone who follows in his footsteps
is urged by Satan to indecency and evil.
Were it not for the favors of God and His mercy to you,
no one of you would have ever been pure.
God purifies anyone He wills —
God is hearing and all-knowing!

22* Let the virtuous and affluent ones among you
cease swearing that they will not support their relatives,
the poor, and the exiled in the way of God.
Let them forgive and forget!
Do you not want God to forgive you?
God is forgiving and merciful!

23* Let those who slander chaste and naive believing women
be cursed in this world and in the Hereafter —
a mighty punishment [is in store] for them!
24. On that Day their tongues, hands, and feet
will testify against them for what they have done.
25* On that Day God will pay them back
what they truly deserve, and they will understand
that God is the manifest Truth.

26. Wicked [women] are for wicked [men]
and wicked [men] — for wicked [women].
Good [women] are for good [men]
and good [men] — for good [women].
The [good ones] are innocent of heresy —
there is forgiveness and a generous provision for them.

27. O you, who have believed!
Do not enter other people's houses without permission
and without wishing peace to their dwellers.
This is better for you — perhaps you will remember!
28. If you see that no one is home,
do not enter without permission.
If you are told to go away, go away —
this will be more decent of you.
God is well aware of what you do!
29. There will be no fault upon you
if for some reason you have entered deserted houses.
God knows what you reveal and what you conceal.

30. Tell believing men to keep their eyes downcast
and to guard their private parts —
this is more decent of them.
Verily, God is well aware of all their deeds.

31* Tell believing women to keep their eyes downcast,
to guard their private parts,
and to avoid displaying their loveliness
if it is not naturally exposed to the eyes.
Let them cover their cleavage with scarves
and conceal their loveliness from everyone,
except their husbands, their fathers,
their husbands' fathers, their sons,
their husbands' sons, their brothers,
their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons,
their female relatives, their slaves,
male attendants who are free of desire,
and children who do not notice female nakedness.
And let them not stomp their feet in a way
that reveals their hidden loveliness.

O believers!
Let you all turn to God — perhaps you will succeed!

32. Marry the single ones among you and the virtuous ones
among your male and female slaves.
If they are poor, God will enrich them by His Grace.
God is limitless and all-knowing!

33* Let those who do not have the means to marry
restrain themselves until God enriches them by His Grace.

If some of your slaves ask you
for a writ granting them freedom, give them the writ
if you know that there is some good in them,
and give them something of the means that God has given you.
Do not force your girls into prostitution
for material gain in this life
if they wish to keep their chastity.
But if anyone compels them... Verily, after compulsion,
God is forgiving and merciful!

34. We have sent down to you some Verses
with an Admonition for the God-fearing.
They explain everything by the examples
of those who died before you.

35* God is the Light of the Heavens and earth.
His Light is like a lamp in a niche.
The lamp is behind glass, which shines like a star,
lit from a blessed olive tree
neither from the East nor the West.
Its oil lights up without being touched by fire.
Light upon Light! God guides to His Light anyone He wills.

God teaches people by examples — God is aware of all things.
36. [His Light] is in the houses built with God's permission,
in which His Name is remembered,

and where He is glorified mornings and evenings
37* by men who are not distracted from remembering God
either by bargain or trade,
who observe the prayer and pay the zakat.
They fear the Day
when their hearts and sight will be transformed.
38. God will reward them for the best of their deeds,
and will give them even more of His Grace.
God provides without measure any one He wills.

39. And the works of the disbelievers
are like a mirage in the desert —
a thirsty man imagines it to be water,
and when he approaches, he finds it to be nothing.
But in himself he will find God,
Who will demand his account —
God is quick at accounting!
40. Or they are like darkness in the deep ocean,
where a wave overlays a wave with a cloud above,
where darkness overlays darkness.
He stretches his hand out, but he barely sees it.
He to whom God did not give any Light
shall remain without Light!

41* Do you not see how everything in the Heavens and earth
glorifies God? The birds do it by flapping their wings.
Everyone knows one's prayer and praise,
and God knows well all their works.
42. To God belongs the Dominion of the Heavens and earth,
and to God is [our] return!

43. Do you not see how God drives the clouds,
then assembles them together,
piling them up on top of each other?
Do you not see how the rain seeps down between them?
Then, down from the sky,
He sends mountains [of clouds] loaded with hail.
He strikes with them anyone He wills,
or turns them away from anyone He wills.
The flash of His lightning obscures the sight!
44. God alternates the night and the day —
verily, there is a lesson in this for those who can see!

45* God has created all the beasts from water.
Some crawl on their bellies, some walk on two or four feet.
God creates whatever He wills —
verily, God has power over everything.

46. We have sent down Verses pouring forth Light.
God guides to the straight path anyone He wishes.
47* [The Hypocrites] say:
"We believe in God and the Messenger, and we obey!"
Then some of them turn around —
they are the disbelievers!

48. When they are called to God and His Messenger
to let him decide between them,
some of them turn away.
49. If they were supporting the Truth,
they would have come to him in submission.
50. What is in their hearts? Is it disease or doubt?
Or do they fear that God and His Messenger
might treat them unjustly?
But no, they themselves are unjust!

51. When the believers are called to God
and His Messenger to let him judge between them,
they have just one answer:
"We hear and we obey!"
They are the ones who will succeed.
52. They obey God and His Messenger, they fear God
and are devout, they are the ones who will prevail!

53. They swear their most solemn oath, by God,
that the moment you command them,
they will set forth [to fight].
Say:
"Stop swearing, but obey as you should.
Verily, God is well informed of everything you do!"
54. Say:
"Obey God and obey the Messenger!
If you turn away, he's responsible for his burden
and you are responsible for your burden.
If you obey him, you'll follow the right path.
The Messenger's duty is only a clear transmission!"

55* God has promised to those
who believed and did good works
that He will make them inherit the land,
as He made their predecessors inherit it;
that He will establish the religion He chose for them,
and that He will grant them security
after they have been in fear:
— Let them serve Me
without associating anything with Me!
Those who disbelieve after that are reprobates.

56. Observe the prayer, pay the zakat, and obey the Messenger.
Then, perhaps you will be treated to mercy.
57. Do not think that the disbelievers
can change anything in the land.
Their abode will be Hellfire — what an evil outcome!

58. O you who have believed!
Let your slaves and those who are under age
ask your permission [to enter] three times a day:
before the morning prayer,
around noon when you divest yourself of your garments,

and after the evening prayer —
three times when you are undressed.
There will be no fault upon anyone of you
if you visit one another at other times.
Thus God makes the Signs clear to you.
God is all-knowing and wise!
59. Let the children who have come of age
ask your permission like adults.
Thus God makes His Signs clear to you.
God is all-knowing and wise!

60* There is no fault upon elderly women
with no hope for marriage
if they divest themselves of their garments
without displaying their loveliness.
Modesty suits them best — God is hearing and knowing!

61* There is no fault upon the blind, the lame, the sick,
and upon yourselves if you eat in your houses
or in the houses of your fathers, mothers,
brothers and sisters, of your uncles, your aunts
on both your father's and mother's side,
as well as in the houses to which you have keys
or at your friend's [house]. There is no fault upon you
if you eat with others or separately.
Upon entering a house, greet each other
with a blessing and a kind salutation from God.
Thus God makes the Signs clear to you —
perhaps you will understand!
62. The believers are those
who believe in God and His Messenger.

When you see him on official business,
do not leave without his permission.
Verily, those who ask for permission
believe in God and His Messenger.
If they ask your permission
to leave for personal business,
give it to those you wish
and ask God to forgive them.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

63. Do not address the Messenger in your gatherings
in the same manner as you address one another.
God knows who of you hides and then slips away unseen.
Those who disobey [the Prophet's] orders,
let them beware, lest some misfortune befalls them,
or a painful punishment is meted upon them.

64. Verily, everything in Heavens and earth belongs to God.
He surely knows your intentions.
The Day they are brought back to Him,
He will tell them what they have done.
God is well aware of everything!

V. 2: The Koran doesn't advocate the stoning of adulterers. Should she be flogged with a whip, a cane, or a bunch of grass?

V. 3: An "Associator," i.e., a Christian or an Idolater.

Vv. 11f: After being lost in the desert, the Prophet's wife '**Aisha** was returned to camp by a soldier, provoking slanderous rumors about her virtue. "The one who assumed the greater part [of the sin]," was the main slanderer — the leader of the Hypocrites in Medina, '**Abdallah ibn Ubay**.

V. 15: Events in the life of the Prophet and his community served to bolster human rights. The Koran is not an abstract discourse: it is based on real life in the Prophet's time.

V. 20: The ellipsis emphasizes the threat of punishment.

V. 22: At first 'Aisha's father wanted to kill his daughter's revilers; but being righteous, he pardoned and forgot their sin.

V. 23: Mary, mother of Jesus, was also a victim of slander.

V. 25: "What they really deserve" or "by the true religion".

V. 31: Enemies of Islam see in this verse permission to plunder other people's houses.

V. 31: "Loveliness," lit., "ornaments." The male attendants free of desire are old men and eunuchs. Is dancing banned, if women "should not stomp their feet?"

V. 33: The Koran endorses a humane attitude towards slaves.

V. 35: This verse ushers one of the most intense spiritual passages. God's Light shines from a niche in the wall — from the depths of the Unknown. According to one interpretation, the niche is the symbol of man's five senses; the glass that of imagination that enhances the physical sensation; the lamp that of the power of reason that brings logic into imagination; the tree that of the power of generalization, which extends through its branching the spiritual experience to the boundaries of the universe and not only beyond the east and the west; and the oil that of the energy which multiplies the Light to infinity.

"Light upon Light": God is believed to be hidden under seventy thousand veils of Light and Darkness.

Vv. 35f are Christian in spirit. Comp.: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereupon you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).

The beauty of the Koran is not only in its language, in the rhythm of its verses, and in the sound of the Arabic words, but also in its highly spiritual and moral thoughts that equal or surpass those found in many other spiritual texts in the contemporary world. The Koran is not a difficult Book, on the contrary, it is simple, deep and diverse, as life itself, and it must be easy to read in translations to modern languages. An attentive reader will find in it images and teachings that complement and explain the Old and New Testaments.

V. 37: "When their hearts and sight will be transformed" or "turned inside out."

V. 41: "Each [creature] knows its prayer and praise," i.e., all living creatures have an innate knowledge of God. This is why it is prescribed to pronounce the name of God while slaughtering animals: the sound of God's Name should divert the attention of the animal from its suffering and remind the butcher that the life of all living creatures is sacred. The existence of a soul is predicated on the existence of a central nervous system. Therefore, most living crea-

tures have a rudimentary soul, or at least the potential to have a soul and to feel thereby the presence of their Creator.

To glorify God by prayer or action is a natural act, as flapping their wings is natural for birds. Indeed, all that exists glorifies God (S.17:44). Remembering God is like reciting His praise, and forgetting God is like forgetting one's existence (S.59:19).

V. 45: Such a version of the creation of animals is not at odds with modern science.

Vv. 47-51: Notice that the Prophet Muhammad had the right to judge people by the Koran. When these verses were promulgated, he was already the recognized absolute leader of his nation.

V. 55: "He will grant them security after they have been in fear." This may be a reference to the retreat of the Meccans after their siege of Medina during the War of Trenches (7 H).

V. 61: Abrogation of the bias against the poor and the handicapped who, apparently, were fed separately in pre-Islamic times.

VII. Fighting in the Way of God

Sura 8 The Spoils of War.

S.8 is devoted to war in the way of God and to the division of the booty after a victory. The date of the sura is probably 2 H, because the intervention of Angels on the side of the Prophet's troops tis considered to have taken place at the battle of Badr (A.D. 624).

S.8 refers to some of the problems the Muslims had to deal with at the time: lack of discipline in the armed forces bent on looting and disobeying orders; bickering between the Ansar (the Muslim converts of Medina) and the Muhajjirun (Muslim emigrants from Mecca); the persecution of the Muslims who stayed behind in Mecca after the emigration of the Prophet to Medina. The situation demanded a community based on faith, discipline and legislation.

8. THE SPOILS OF WAR
Medinan, 75 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* They ask you about the spoils of war.
Say:
"The spoils belong to God and the Messenger.
If you believe, then fear God, live in harmony,
and obey God and His Messenger."

2. The believers are the ones
whose hearts throb at the mention of God
and whose faith grows at the recitation of His Verses.
They put their trust in their Lord,
3. observe the prayer, and give from the provisions
We have bestowed upon them.
4. These are the true believers!
They have degrees of honor, forgiveness,
and ample provision with their Lord.

5* Your Lord made you leave your home for the sake of Truth,

albeit some of the believers were against it.
6* But after Truth manifested itself,
they argued with you about it,
as if they were driven to death that was before their eyes.

7* God had promised you that one of the two companies
would fall in your hands,
and you chose the one that was unarmed.
By His Words God wanted to affirm the Truth
and cut the roots under the disbelievers.
8. This was in order to affirm the Truth and expose falsehood;
however hateful that was for the sinners.

9* Then you called for your Lord's help, and He answered you:
— I am going to support you
with a thousand Angels in ranks upon ranks.
10. By these glad tidings God wanted to give hope
and comfort to your hearts.
No victory is possible without God!
Verily, God is almighty and wise!

11. Then He induced sleepiness in you
as a comfort from Himself.
He sent down water upon you from the sky to purify you,
to wash from you the pollution of Satan,
to fortify your hearts,
and to make you stand firmly on your feet.

12* Then your Lord inspired the Angels:
— I am with you, support the believers!
I will fill the hearts of the disbelievers with terror,
and you, smite [them] on their necks
and chop all their fingers off!
13. This was because they opposed God and His Messenger.
And if any one opposes God and His Messenger...
verily, God is stern in punishment!
14. — This is for you, let you taste it!
The disbelievers will suffer the penalty of the Fire!

15. O you who have believed!
When you meet disbelievers in battle array,
do not turn your backs to them.
16. Whoever turns his back to them on that day,
will bring God's wrath upon himself,
unless it is a maneuver in battle
or a move to rejoin [one's] company.
His abode shall be Hellfire — what a terrible outcome!

17* It is not you who killed them — it was God.
It is not you who blinded their eyes — it was God,
Who was testing believers by His gracious intervention.
Verily, God is hearing and all-knowing!

18. Verily, God will weaken the plots of the disbelievers.
19* They were asking for victory, and they received judgment!
It would have been better for you to end [the war],
but if you resume it, We will resume it as well,
and then your forces will not help you,
even if they are multiplied many times.
Verily, God is on the side of the believers!

20. O you who have believed!
Obey God and His Messenger and do not turn away, but listen.
21. Do not be like those who say:
"We hear,"
and do not listen.
22. Verily, the meanest creatures in God's sight
are the deaf and dumb — those who do not understand.
23. Had God found any good in them,
He would have allowed them to hear,
but even if He allowed them to hear,
they would have turned away and denied.

24* O you who have believed!
Respond to the call of God and His Messenger
when He calls you to the source of life.
Know that God stands between man and his heart,
and that you shall be gathered to Him.
25. Fear the ordeal that shall beset [you all]
and not only the sinners,
and know that God is severe in punishment.
26. Remember the time when you were few in the land.
You were despised and feared eviction,
but [God] sheltered you, supported you by His help,
and provided you with good sustenance —
perhaps you will be grateful!
27. O you who have believed!
Do not betray the trust of God and the Messenger;
do not knowingly betray your trusts!
28. Know that your wealth and your children are only a trial,
and that with God there is a great reward for you.
29* O you who have believed!
Fear God, then He will grant you Salvation,
absolve you from evil, and forgive you —
indeed, mighty is the grace of God!

30. Then the disbelievers plotted against you
in order to capture, murder, or expel you.
They were plotting and God was plotting,
but God is the best of plotters!
31. When Our Verses were recited to them, they said:
"We've heard that before —
these are just tales of the Ancients.
We would have made others like them, if we wanted to."
32. Then they said:
"O God! If this is really the Truth from You,

then pelt us with rocks from the sky
or inflict upon us a painful punishment."
33. But God will not punish them
as long as you are among them.
He will not punish them
as long as they can ask for forgiveness.
34* But why is not God punishing them for denying access
to the Sacred Mosque, though they are not its custodians?
Only the God-fearing can be its custodians,
but most of them do not know [it].
35. Their prayer at the [Sacred] House
is but whistling and clapping of hands.
Let you taste the punishment for your disbelief!

36. Verily, the disbelievers spend of their wealth
only to create diversions on the path of God.
They spend, but then they regret it.
In the end the disbelievers shall be defeated
and gathered in Hellfire.
37. God will separate the impure from the righteous,
pile the impure ones on top of each other,
and dump them into Hellfire — indeed, they are the losers.

38. Tell the disbelievers that if they renounce [disbelief],
their past shall be forgiven, but if they start again,
their fate shall be that of the [nations] of Old!
39. So fight them until dissent is over,
and the entire religion is returned to God!
If they desist, then, verily, God sees everything they do.
40. But if they start again,
then know that God is your Protector,
the best Protector and the best Helper.

41. One fifth of your spoils belongs to God and the Messenger,
to near relatives and orphans, to the poor and the wayfarer,
if you believe in God and in what We revealed
to Our servant on salvation day —
the day when the two companies clashed.
God has power over everything!
42* Then you were on the nearer side [of the valley]
and the [enemy's] caravan was below you on the farther side.
Even if you had agreed on the time,
you would have still missed the appointment,
so that God might complete a pre-ordained matter:
that those predestined to perish
and those predestined to survive, survive.
Verily, God is hearing and knowing!

43. Then God made you dream that they were few in number.
Had he showed you that their number was great,
you would have certainly lost heart
and begun to argue about [the fight]. But God saved [you].
Verily, He knows what is in [people's] hearts.

44. When you met, God reduced their number in your eyes.
He also reduced your number in their eyes
to bring a pre-ordained matter to an end.
[All] affairs return to God.

45. O you who have believed!
When you meet a [hostile] company, be steadfast
and remember God oftentimes — perhaps you will succeed!
46. Obey God and His Messenger
and do not argue among yourselves,
lest you weaken and lose your resolve.
And endure — verily, God is with those who endure!

47. Do not be like those who walk out of their houses
full of themselves, wanting to show off.
They put obstacles in God's way,
but God encompasses everything they do.
48. Then Satan made their actions alluring to them, saying:
"Nobody will overcome you today if I stay beside you."
But when the two companies met, he turned around and said:
"I've nothing to do with you! I see what you can't see
and I fear God, for God is harsh in punishment."

49. The Hypocrites and the diseased at heart say:
"These people are deluded by their religion!"
But if one puts his trust in God...
verily, God is mighty and wise!

50. If you could only see the sinners dying,
while the Angels beat them in their faces and backs:
"Taste the punishment of the burning flames!
51. Get it for the workings of your hands,
for God will never be unjust to [His] servants!
52. [Get it] like the people of Pharaoh and their predecessors!
They rejected the Signs of God
and God seized them for their sins.
Verily, God is strong and stern in punishment!

53. God will not change the Grace He has given to people,
unless they change what is in their souls.
Verily, God is hearing and all-knowing!
54. [Get it] like the people of Pharaoh and their predecessors!"
They had rejected the Signs of God,
so We destroyed them for their sins.
We drowned the people of Pharaoh —
indeed, they were wrong-doers!
55. Verily, the worst creatures in God's sight
are those who deny Him: they have no faith!

56. They are the ones with whom you entered a treaty,
and who are ever breaking the treaty without fearing God!
57. If you have the upper hand against them in war,
disperse them and those who follow in their steps —

perhaps they will remember!
58. If you fear betrayal from certain quarters,
abrogate [the treaty] to be on equal terms [with them].
Verily, God does not love traitors!

59. Do not let the disbelievers think
that they will have the upper hand —
they cannot escape, anyway!
60* Prepare against them everything you can — the forces
and the cavalry to terrify God's enemies and yours,
and other enemies unknown to you, but known to God.
Whatever you spend in the way of God
will be returned to you, and you shall not be wronged.

61. But if they incline toward peace,
incline toward it as well and put your trust in God.
Verily, He is the Hearer, the All-Knowing.
62. If they want to outsmart you,
then, verily, God is sufficient for you.
He has fortified you by His help and by the believers,
63. binding their hearts together.
You would not achieve such a union of hearts
even if you had spent all that exists on earth.
but God has bound them together —
verily, He is mighty and wise!

64. — O Prophet! God is sufficient for you
and for the believers who follow in your steps.
65. — O Prophet! Incite the believers to fight!
If among you there are twenty who endure,
they will overcome two hundred [disbelievers].
If among you there are one hundred,
they will overcome a thousand —
indeed, these people lack understanding!
66. God knows your weak spots and will lighten your burden.
If among you there are one hundred who endure,
they will overcome two hundred [disbelievers].
If among you there are a thousand,
with God's permission, they will overcome two thousand —
indeed, God is with those who endure.

67* It is not proper for a Prophet to take prisoners
before he conquers the entire land.
You desire the vanities of this world,
but God desires the Hereafter. God is mighty and wise!
68. Had it not been for an earlier Divine Ordinance,
a severe punishment would have been meted upon you
for [the spoils] you had taken.
69. So enjoy the permissible and the rightful of your spoils,
and fear God — verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

70. — O Prophet! Tell the prisoners who have fallen into your hands:
"If God finds goodness in your hearts, He will give you

something better than what has been taken away from you.
And He will forgive you — God is forgiving and merciful!"
71. But if they intend to betray you,
then they have already betrayed God,
Who gives [you] power over them.
God is all-knowing and wise!

72* Those who believed, emigrated, and fought
with their property and persons in the cause of God,
and those who sheltered and helped them,
are all close to one another.
But you are not close to those who had believed
until they [joined you] in emigration.
If they ask you for help in religious matters,
it is your duty to help them, but not against a people
with whom you are bound by a treaty.
God sees everything you do!

73. The disbelievers befriend one another,
and if you do not emulate them,
mutiny and a great corruption will reign in the land.
74. The true believers are those who believed, emigrated,
and fought in the cause of God,
and those who gave them shelter and help.
There is forgiveness for them and a generous provision.

75* Those who have believed at a later date,
then emigrated and fought on your side,
are also with you, but in God's Book,
relatives are the closest to one another.
Verily, God is aware of everything!

V. 1: The division of spoils is further detailed in vv. 41 and 67-70. The injunction to obey both God and the Prophet testifies to the rising prestige of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina.

Vv. 5f: "Your home" is Mecca (S.106:3). Some of the followers of the Prophet did not emigrate with him to Medina and stayed in Mecca, where they suffered persecution and forced exile.

V. 6: "Argued... about the Truth," i.e., about the war.

V. 7: The Muslims could attack either a poorly guarded caravan coming from Syria or clash with superior forces from Mecca. After some hesitation, the Prophet decided to engage the former.

V. 9: More about the heavenly help in vv. 12 and 42-44.

V. 12: "Smite [them] on their necks and chop all their fingers off." These words, addressed here to the Angels, are often mentioned by the enemies of Islam as a proof of its belligerence and intolerance. However, they referred to internecine discords among the Arabs when there were several attempts at killing the Prophet. They were an answer to the "terrorists" of that time. Nowadays, these words incite to violence only the most fanatical opponents of the spoliation of Arab lands by "infidels".

V. 17: "Threw [dust] in their eyes." According to tradition, the Prophet's forces were helped by a dust storm that blinded the assailants. Badr is the first Muslim victory (Cf. SS.25,30,8,47).

V. 19: "Victory" and "judgment" are expressed by the same word, **fath**, allowing a word-play on the two meanings of this word.

V. 24: "God stands between man and his heart," meaning that God knows the thoughts of man better than man himself.

V. 29: Salvation — **furqan**, see S.25. Same word in v. 41.

V. 34: The Prophet claimed control of Mecca for his clan.

V. 42: "Predestined," lit., "destined by a Sign."

V. 60: First mention of cavalry in battle.

Vv. 67ff: Taking prisoners complicated the division of the spoils of war. The Prophet opposed selling prisoners as slaves and he greeted as full members of his community any prisoners who converted to Islam.

V. 72: "Those who sheltered..." are the Ansars (S.3:52).

V. 75: Blood relations have precedence over casual relationships. Breaking the ties within the family, the circle of friends, and the clan is a great sin for the Muslims.

SURA 47 MUHAMMAD. *This early Medinan sura (the first in which the Prophet is called by name) is composed of Warnings and exhortations about war, probably issued after the battle of Badr (2 H).*

47. MUHAMMAD
Medinan, 38 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. The works of those who disbelieve
and create obstructions in God's path are doomed to fail.
2. [God] will absolve from evil deeds
and improve the well-being of those who believe,
do good works, and trust that the [Revelation]
sent down to Muhammad is the Truth of their Lord.
3. Indeed, the disbelievers follow falsehood,
and the believers follow the Truth of their Lord.
This is how God teaches people by their own examples!

4* When you meet disbelievers, smite [them] on their necks,
and when they are subdued, tighten [their] bonds.
[Free them] out of mercy or for ransom
after the war lays down its burdens.
Let it be so!
If God wills, He will surely defeat them,
but [first] He wants to test some of you by the others.
Those who died in the cause of God,
He will never let their works fail.
5* He will guide them, improve their conditions
6. and admit them to the Paradise He has described to them.

7. O you who have believed!
If you help God, He will help you
and set you firmly on your feet.
8. But for the disbelievers there is a downfall!

[God] will fail their works
9. for hating God's Revelation,
and He will make their works fruitless.

10. Have they not traveled in the land
and seen the fate of their predecessors?
God had brought destruction upon them,
and so it shall be with the disbelievers.
11. Indeed, God protects the believers,
but the disbelievers are without a protector.

12. Verily, God will lead those who believed and did good
into the Gardens under which the rivers flow.
As for the disbelievers,
they will indulge in pleasures
and devour food like cattle.
The Fire will be their abode!

13. How many towns We have destroyed that were more powerful
than the town which expelled you!
Nobody came to their rescue!
14. Is the one who accepts the clear Proofs of his Lord
like the one whose evil deeds are made attractive to him
and who follows his passions?

15* Here is the Paradise promised to the God-fearing
with rivers of water that never corrupts,
rivers of milk whose taste never changes,
rivers of wine delicious to taste,
and rivers of pure honey;
with fruit of all kinds and forgiveness of their Lord!
Are they like those who shall stay in the Fire for ever
and drink boiling water that will tear up their entrails?

16* Some of them seem to listen to you.
But as soon as they leave you,
they say to those who have received Knowledge:
"What was he talking about?"
These are the ones whose hearts God has sealed
and who follow their passions.
17. [God] increases in righteousness
those who received Guidance, and gives them devotion.
18. Let [the sinners] wait for the Hour
which shall suddenly come upon them —
its portents are already in plain view!
But will the Reminder benefit them
when they are suddenly confronted with it?
19* Be aware that there is no god but God,
and ask forgiveness for your sins
and those of believing men and believing women.
God knows everything: how you get around and where you rest.
20. The believers say:
"How come a sura isn't revealed?"

But when a teaching sura mentioning fighting is revealed,
just look at the diseased at heart:
they stare at you as if they were seeing death.
It would have been better for them
21. to obey and to speak the just words.
When their affairs come up for judgment,
it will be better for them to be true to God.
22* If they had the power,
they would have spread corruption in the land
and broken the blood ties.
23. Such are those that God has cursed
and deprived of hearing and sight.
24. Why do they not meditate on the Koran?
Are their hearts so tightly locked?

25. Verily, Satan instigates and seduces with [false] hopes
those who turn around when Guidance is explained to them.
26. They say to those who hate God's Revelation:
"We'll follow you in some of these matters."
But God is aware of their secret plots!

27* And how will it be when the Angels come to take them away,
and start beating them on their faces and backs!
28. Yes, they followed what angers God
and hated what satisfies Him.
So He ruined their works!

29. Those who are diseased in their hearts, [do they hope]
that God will not bring their resentment to light?
30. Had We willed, We would have shown them to you
and you would have recognized them by their features,
you would have surely recognized them by their speech!
God is aware of [all] what you do!

31. We test you to We find out
who is the best among you in stamina and endurance,
and We will check everything that is said about you!
32. Verily, those who deny God turn away from God's path.
They oppose the Messenger,
albeit Guidance has been made clear to them.
They cannot harm God in the least,
and He will ruin their works.

33. O you who have believed!
Obey God and obey the Messenger,
and do not reduce your works to naught.
34. Verily, God will not pardon those who deny God,
go astray from God's path, and die after rejecting God.
35. Do do not falter and do not call for peace
when you have the upper hand!
God is with you —
He will not nullify your works.

36* The life of this world is only play and fun.
If you believe and fear Him,
He will give you your reward,
and He will not demand anything
of your property in exchange.
37. But if He asked for it and pressured you,
you would cling to it,
and He would bring out your anger.
38. Indeed, you are called upon
to spend in the cause of God.
But some of you are miserly,
and whoever is miserly
is miserly to his own disadvantage.
God is rich and you are poor. If you turned away,
He would replace you by another people
that would not be like you!

V. 4: The reference is to the battle of Badr (S.8:7, 12). For moderate Muslims there is only one just war — a war for monotheism, provoked by the enemy. Participation in such a war (**djihad**, from the root **djhd** — to strive toward something) is not an obligation like prayer and alms-giving, but is the duty of Muslims who can bear arms (a **Mudjahed** is someone who fights for faith). Jesus recognized a just war, as well: "Think not that I come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

"Tighten their bonds" i.e., take them prisoner. "Until the war lays down its burdens" — "until the war is over." About the humane treatment of prisoners, cf. S.8:70.

Vv. 5,6: These verses are applied to the souls of the dead.

V. 15: Afterlife is described in its symbolical aspect. Fruit of all kinds are the bounties of God; water is for purifying and freshening the spirit; milk is nourishment for the heart; wine is to celebrate love; honey is to sweeten life after death.

V. 19: "How you get around and where you rest," meaning that God knows how you manage your affairs and how you behave at home — good breeding is considered to be a religious duty (cf. SS.22,58). V. 22: "Had you had the power" or "had you turned away."

"Broken the blood ties" or "caused bloodshed."

V. 27: "Beat them on their faces and backs" — on their faces for open misdeeds, and on their backs for covert sins.

V. 36: God does not ask man to desist of all his worldly possessions. He is too just to ask for unnatural means of salvation. Islam used to allow abortion before the 120th day of conception, i.e., before, as they believed, the soul entered the fetus and made it a person. In our times, Muslims usually do not condone abortion.

SURA 3 (II) THE HOUSE OF 'IMRAN. ***The second part of S.3 contains passages about war, with several references to the victory at Badr (2 H), which has already been alluded to in the preceding suras, and to the defeat at Uhud (3 H).*** ***The first part of S.3 starts on p. 228.***

3. *THE HOUSE OF 'IMRAN*
Medinan, 200 verses

PART II. (VV. 110-200)

110*You are the best community established for man.
You urge to what is lawful and you forbid evil,
and you believe in God.
Had the People of the Scripture believed,
it would have been much better for them.
Some of them believe, but most of them are reprobate.
111. If they harm you, it will be only slightly
and if they fight you, they will show you their backs —
nobody shall help them.
112*Wherever they are, humiliation shall hover over them,
unless they bind themselves by a Covenant with God
and a Covenant with the people.
They called upon themselves the wrath of God and agony
for denying the Signs of God, killing the Prophets unjustly,
rebelling, and transgressing all bounds.

113. But they are not all alike!
Among the People of the Scripture
there is a steadfast community. They prostrate themselves
and recite the Verses of God all night long.
114. They believe in God and the Last Day,
they urge to the acceptable and forbid the unlawful.
They compete among themselves in good deeds —
they are the upright.
115. The good that they do shall never be in vain.
God is well aware of those who fear Him.

116. The disbelievers cannot protect themselves from God
by their wealth or their children!
They shall be the inmates of the Fire
in which they shall abide for ever.
117. Their life on earth is like a chilly wind that destroys
the harvest of the people who wronged their souls.
God has not wronged them — they have wronged themselves!

118. O you who have believed!
Do not choose close friends outside of your community,
lest they harm you, as they enjoy seeing you suffer.
Hatred flows from their mouths,
but still worse is what is hidden in their hearts.
This is how We explain the Signs to you —
if you [only] had wisdom!
119*You love them, but they do not love you,
though you believe in the whole Scripture.
Upon meeting you, they say:
"We have believed!"
But when alone, they bite their nails in anger at you.

Say:
"Let you choke on your anger!"
Verily, God knows what is in the hearts!
120. It irks them when you get something good
and they cheer up when misfortune strikes you.
But if you are patient and God-fearing,
their intrigues will not harm you in the least.
Verily, God encompasses everything they do!

121*You left your family one morning
to lead the believers to their battle positions.
God is hearing and knowing!
122. Two of your sections were faltering,
but God took them under His protection.
Let the believers put their trust in God!

123*God had already sustained you at Badr
when you were helpless.
So, fear God — perhaps you will be grateful!
124. You said to the believers:
"Is it not enough for you that your Lord assisted you
by sending down three thousand Angels?
125. Yes! Be patient and fear God.
If you're suddenly attacked,
your Lord would reinforce you
with five thousand charging Angels."

126. God did it to comfort you with good news
and to reassure your hearts.
Help is from God alone, the Mighty, the Wise.
127*He can cut off a wing of the disbelievers
or abase them so much that they will withdraw
before reaching their goal.
128. It does not depend on you if He forgives or punishes them.
Verily, they are among the evildoers!

129. Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to God.
He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills.
God is forgiving and merciful!

130*O you who have believed!
Do not enrich yourselves by usury,
doubling or twice-doubling [a loan],
but fear God — perhaps you will succeed!
131. And beware of the Fire prepared for the disbelievers!
132. Obey God and the Messenger,
perhaps you will be shown mercy!
133. Hasten towards receiving your Lord's forgiveness
and a Garden as wide as Heavens and earth
prepared for the God-fearing —
134. for those who contribute in prosperity and in adversity,
who restrain their anger and pardon people.
God loves those who do good deeds!

135. They are of those who, after committing indecency
or wronging their souls, remember God
and ask forgiveness for their sins.
And who besides God can forgive sins?
They do not persist in evil, knowing
136. that their reward will be forgiveness from their Lord
and Gardens under which the rivers flow
where they will abide for ever.
What a great reward for those who toil!

137. There were many ways of life before you,
but travel in the land and see
what was the end of those who denied!
138*This is an oration to the people,
a Guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing!

139. Do not lose heart and do not grieve.
If you have faith, you shall gain in stature;
140*and if affliction touches you,
a similar affliction will touch the others.
We distribute such days equally among the people,
so that God might identify the believers
and choose confessors in your midst
(indeed, God does not love sinners),
141. and so that God might purify the believers
and abase the disbelievers.
142. Or do you think that you will enter Paradise without God
finding out who of you fought and showed endurance?
143. You wished death before seeing it,
and now here it is before your eyes.

144*Muhammad is only a Messenger among many earlier Messengers.
Would you turn back if he died or was killed?
Those who turn back will not hurt God in the least,
and those who are grateful, God will soon reward them.

145. Not a single soul can die, except by God's permission —
her term is written in a Book.
If someone desires the reward in this life,
We will give it to him.
If someone desires the reward in the Hereafter,
We will give it to him.
Soon We will reward all the grateful ones!

146. How many Prophets have led in battle
numerous companies of steadfast [fighters].
After suffering setbacks in the way of God,
they did not weaken or give up —
God loves those who endure!
147. All what they were able to say was:
"O our Lord! Forgive us our sins
and the excesses in our affairs.
Steady our feet, help us

against the people who disbelieve."
148.God will give them a reward in this life
and an excellent recompense in the Hereafter.
God loves those who do good!

149.O you who have believed!
If you obeyed the disbelievers,
they would make you turn back and join the losers.
150.Yes! God is your Protector and your best Helper.
151. Soon We will cast terror in the hearts of the disbelievers
for their associating with God [some idols]
for which He has not sent down any power.
Their abode shall be the Fire —
what a bad dwelling for the wrong-doers!

152*God has fulfilled His promise to you when,
with His permission, you began defeating [the enemy];
but later you lost heart and began to oppose His Command.
You defied it when He showed you the coveted [spoils].
Indeed, some of you want this life,
while others want the Hereafter!
Then, to test you,
[God] gave [the enemy] the upper hand.
But He pardoned you:
God is full of mercy for the believers.

153*[Remember] how, oblivious of everyone,
you clambered uphill, while the Messenger
was calling you back from the rear.
To punish you [God] sent to you one setback
after another to prevent you from grieving
over the loss and over what had befallen you.
God is well aware of your deeds!

154*After the setback, He sent to some of you a quiet sleep,
and anxiety into the souls of the others,
so that they began to have doubts about God,
as they used to doubt in the Time of Ignorance; they said:
"Does this matter concern us?"
Say:
"Verily, this matter is entirely in God's hands!"
What they don't reveal to you, they hide in their souls.
They say:
"If we had anything to do with this matter,
we wouldn't have been slaughtered here."
Say:
"Even if you had stayed at home,
those who were destined to die
would have certainly gone to the place of their death!"
This would have been a Divine test
to reveal what is in your souls
and to purify you of what is in your hearts.
Indeed, God knows well what is in the souls!

155*And those who retreated on the day when the two armies met,
it was Satan who caused them to fail
because of what they had done.
But God pardoned them, for, verily,
God is forgiving and full of love!

156. O you who have believed!
Do not imitate the disbelievers
who say about their brothers
while traveling in the land or fighting:
"Had they stayed with us, they would've remained alive
and wouldn't have been killed!"
Thus God filled their hearts with remorse!
God gives life and death: God observes everything you do.

157*If you are killed or die in the cause of God,
then God's forgiveness and His mercy
will be better for you than the sum of your deeds.
158. Whether you die or are killed,
you shall all be gathered to God.

159* — [O Muhammad!] By the mercy of God
you are too soft-hearted toward them;
but had you been rough and inflexible,
they would have certainly broken away from you.
So pardon them and ask God to forgive them.
Consult with them in the affairs,
but while making decisions, put your trust in God —
verily, God loves those who trust Him.

160. Nobody will overcome you if God helps you,
but if He abandons you, then who will help you?
Let all the believers put their trust in God!

161*It does not befit a Prophet to deceive.
Anyone who deceives shall have to return on Judgment Day
everything he obtained by deceit.
Then every soul shall receive according to her deeds,
and not a single one shall be treated unjustly.

162. Is the one who follows God's pleasure
like the one who incurs God's wrath
and whose abode will be Hell — [what] a bad outcome!

163. Everyone has his degree [of goodness] before God;
God observes everything they do.
164. God bestowed a favor upon the believers
when He sent them a Messenger from their midst
to recite God's Verses to them, to purify them,
and to teach them the Scripture and Wisdom —
indeed, they had been in blatant error before!

165*But when you suffered a defeat,

even though they suffered it twice as much,
you said:
"Where does it come from?"
Say:
"It comes from yourselves!"
Verily, God has power over everything!
166. And if you suffered on the day when the two armies met,
it all happened with God's permission
because He wanted to test the believers,
167. as well as the Hypocrites, who were told:
"Join the fight in the cause of God
or oppose resistance!"
They said:
"Had we known how to fight,
we would've surely followed you!"
On that day they were closer to disbelief than to belief —
they were saying with their mouths
what was not in their hearts.
But God knows best what they conceal!

168. They were saying while sitting out:
"Had they listened to us, they would've stayed alive!"
Say:
"Then avert death from yourselves
if you're telling the truth!"
169. Do not count as dead those who were killed
in the cause of God. No! They are alive!
They will receive their provision from their Lord
170. and enjoy what God has given them of His bounty.
They rejoice for those who stayed behind
and have not joined them yet —
they have no fear and no grief!
171. They rejoice at the goodness and generosity of God,
and at God's intention not to let
the reward of the believers go to waste.
172. They are those who, regardless of defeat,
responded to God and the Messenger.
They are those who do good deeds and fear God —
a great reward is in store for them.
173. They are those who were told:
"These people have gathered in force against you,
so beware of them!"
That only increased their faith, and they said:
"God is sufficient for us, He's the best of Trustees!"

174*They returned with God's grace and favor.
Misfortune did not touch them —
indeed, they sought God's benevolence,
and God is the possessor of a mighty Grace.
175. Only Satan can scare you by his followers,
but if you believe, do not fear them, but fear Me.

176. Do not grieve over those who rush into disbelief.

They cannot harm God in the least,
but God will give them a great punishment
instead of a share in the Afterlife.

177. Verily, those who buy disbelief at the price of faith
cannot hurt God a bit —
a painful punishment is [in store] for them!
178. Let not the disbelievers think that the respite
that We have granted them will benefit them.
We grant them a respite to let them sink into corruption —
a humiliating punishment [is in store] for them.
179*God will not leave the believers as they are now,
but He will separate the wrong from the right.
And He will not reveal to you the Unseen,
but He will choose whom He wills among His Messengers.
So believe in God and His Messengers!
If you believe in God and fear Him,
you shall get a great reward.

180*Those who are too stingy to spend out of the gifts
they have received by the Grace of God, must not think
that it is to their advantage. No, it is worse for them!
On Resurrection Day all they hoarded for themselves
shall be wound around their necks.
The Heavens and the earth belong to God,
and God is well aware of all you do.

181*God hears the words of those who say:
"Truly, isn't God poor and we're rich!"
— We will record their words
and how they have wrongfully murdered the Prophets,
and We will say:
— Taste the punishment by the Fire
182. for the deeds you have brought forth!
Verily, God will not be unjust to [His] servants!
183*They also say:
"Didn't God enjoin us not to believe a Messenger
until he shows an offering that is consumed by the Fire?"
Say:
"There have been Messengers who came to you before me
with clear Proofs and with what you were asking for.
Why have you murdered them if you're telling the truth?"
184*If they reject you,
they have similarly rejected the Messengers
who came before you with clear Proofs,
the Psalms, and an enlightening Scripture.

185. Everyone shall taste death,
but you shall receive your full reward only on Judgment Day.
Successful shall be the one
who is saved from the Fire and enters Paradise.
Is not the life of this world just illusion and deception?
186*Yes, your property and person shall be a test for you.

And you shall hear much aggravating talk from those
who had received the Scripture before you
and those who associate [with God].
But if you are patient and God-fearing,
verily, that will add resolve to [your] deeds.
187. Remember how God made a Covenant
with those who had been given the Scripture, [commanding]
to make it clear to the people and not to hide it!
But they threw it behind their backs
and traded it for a small gain. Evil is this trade!

188. Those who rejoice in their actions
and love unmerited praise, let them not think —
yes, let them not think that they will avoid retribution.
A painful punishment is [in store] for them!

189. To God belongs the Dominion of Heavens and earth —
indeed, God has power over everything.
190. Verily, in the creation of Heavens and earth
and in the succession of night and day
there are Signs for those who think,
191. for those who remember God standing, sitting,
or on their sides, for those who meditate
on the creation of Heavens and earth:
"O our Lord!
You've not created all this in vain!
Glory to You! Save us from the punishment by the Fire!
192. O our Lord!
Truly, You cover with shame anyone You send into the Fire!
The sinners shall not have any helpers!
193. O our Lord!
We've heard a voice calling us to belief:
'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed.
O our Lord!
Forgive us our sins, absolve us from our evil deeds;
and let us die with the righteous!
194. O our Lord!
Give us what You've promised us through Your Messengers
and don't humiliate us on Judgment Day.
Indeed, Your promises You never forget!"

195* Their Lord accepted their prayer:
— I will not let a single work of yours go to waste,
be you male or female —
indeed, you are all [issued] the one from the other.
I will surely absolve from evil deeds
and introduce into the Gardens under which the rivers flow
those who emigrated or were expelled from their dwellings;
who suffered in My cause, fought, and were killed.
This is their reward from God — with God is the best reward!

196* Do not be deluded by the fleeting success
of the disbelievers in the land.

197. There is little enjoyment in it for them.
Their dwelling shall be Hell — evil is this bedding!

198. The God-fearing shall have Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide therein for ever.
Such is their gift from God
and what is from God is the best for the righteous.
199. Verily, among the people who have received the Scripture,
there are some who believe in God,
in the Revelation received by you,
and in the Revelation received by them.
They humble themselves before God
and do not sell the Signs of God for a small price.
Their reward is with their Lord.
Verily, God is quick at accounting!

200. O you who have believed!
Be patient, steadfast, firm, and God-fearing,
then, perhaps, you will prosper!

V. 110: "You urge to what is lawful," i.e., to the respect of the laws, the customs, and the rules of conduct of your people.

V. 110f apply only to the Jews.

V. 112: "They bind themselves by a Covenant with God and a Covenant with the people," lit., "they [are bound] by a rope to God and by a rope to the people."

V. 119: "Their nails," lit., "their fingertips."

V. 121: A reference to the battle of Uhud, west of Medina.

V. 123: A rare designation of a place by its name (Badr).

Vv. 127-128: Reference to divine intervention in battle.

Vv. 130: It is not clear whether the prohibition of usury covers only excessive interest or interest in general. Usury is sinful because it is incompatible with the forgiveness of debts to the poor. This verse is not a fortuitous addition. It completes the preceding verses that God might forgive even His disbelieving enemies.

V. 138: This verse sounds like the beginning of a new sura.

V. 140: A "martyr" or a "witness" — the same name, **shahid**, is given to someone who has died fighting for the cause of God.

V. 144: The Prophet Muhammad was injured in the head at the battle of Uhud.

V. 152: The Command about the spoils — cf. S.8.

V. 153: In reference to the victory at Badr and the defeat at Uhud, when some Muslim disobeyed their Commander.

V. 154: "Doubts of the Time of Ignorance" or "doubts due to ignorance."

V. 155: The kindness of God to the rebels is noteworthy.

V. 157: To qualify as fight in the cause of God or **djihad**, an armed intervention must meet several strict conditions. The aim of a true djihad is to ensure the freedom of preaching the Koran. If the already existing religions do not create obstacles to this preaching, they should be tolerated and, if necessary, protected.

V. 159: "Them" are probably the Prophet's companions. The verse appeals to moderation in war and to a consultative form of government.

Islam spread much faster than Christianity. The victory at Badr against the pagans of Arabia was won by the Prophet himself. After his death, Persia and Byzantium were defeated in 14-16 H, and Egypt, then a part of Byzantium, was conquered three years later. The triumph of Islam was followed by a reduction of the power of priesthood, a curb on superstitions, the introduction of laws protecting minorities and women, and a scientific, literary and economic revival that brought this medieval society out of the doldrums. The civilizing influence of Islam was the object of many a calumny on the part of its opponents. One example of such calumny is the presumed destruction of the famous Library in Alexandria by the Islamic conqueror 'Amru ibn al-'As. In fact, the libraries of Alexandria had been plundered by the Romans and destroyed by the Christian Emperor Theodosius I. A sumptuous modern library was recently built in Alexandria to commemorate the ancient wonder of the world. Muslims revere the relics of past civilizations and maintain exemplary museums in Cairo, Baghdad, and other capital cities.

V. 161: The Prophet was accused of misappropriating some of the booty.

V. 165: A double [defeat] for the enemy: at Badr and at Uhud.

V. 174: A reference to the fighters who came back victorious after the battle of Badr.

V. 179: "The wrong from the right," or "the disbelievers from the faithful." This Verse may have other interpretations.

V. 180 is about the spoils taken against the Prophet's will.

V. 181: "God is poor," meaning: "His supporters are few."

V. 183: One of the slain Prophets could be Abel, the son of Adam. About the Fire consuming the offerings God was satisfied with, cf. Lev. 9:24.

V. 184: The Psalms or, more generally, the Scriptures.

V. 186: "That will add resolve to [your] deeds" or "this is why you have resolve in [your] deeds."

V. 195: "You are the one from the other" — all people are equal regardless of gender, origin, clan, and position.

V. 196: "Fleeting success," or "wanderings," or "fluctuations" of the disbelievers.

SURA 61 THE BATTLE ARRAY. ***S.61 attacks hypocrisy and inaction (vv. 2-3); it summons to fight in the cause of God (v.4) and to devote one's life and assets to this cause (v.11). In vv. 5-6 it castigates the Jews, and in v.14 it expresses some approval of the Christians.***

In this sura, Jesus predicts the coming of the Prophet Ahmad (or Muhammad — the two names have the same root hmd).

61. THE BATTLE ARRAY
Medinan, 14 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Everything in Heavens and earth glorifies God.
   He is the All-Mighty, the Wise.

2* O you who have believed!
Why do you talk about what you do not do?
3. Talking about what you do not do is hateful to God!
4. Verily, God loves those who, in His cause,
fight in a battle array solid like a wall.

5. Moses said to his people:
"O my people! Why do you insult me
if you know that I'm your Messenger from God?"
When they turned around,
God turned their hearts around —
indeed, God does not guide sinful people!

6* Jesus, son of Mary, said:
"O Children of Israel! I'm the Messenger of God
[sent down] to you to confirm the Truth
that had come before me in the Torah
and to announce the good news that a Messenger
by the name of Ahmad shall come after me."
But when he came to them with the clear Proofs,
they said:
"This's obvious magic!"

7. Who does a greater wrong
than the one who lies about God
when he is called to Islam?
God does not guide sinful people!
8. They want to extinguish God's light with their mouths,
but God will perfect His Light
even if the disbelievers hate it.

9. He is the One, Who has sent His Messenger
with the Guidance and the religion of Truth
to make him raise it above all religions,
even if the Associators hate it.

10. O you who have believed!
Should I offer you a bargain
that will save you from a painful punishment? —
11. Believe in God and His Messenger
and fight in the cause of God
with your property and your persons.
This is better for you, if you only knew!
12. God will forgive your sins and usher you
into the Gardens under which the rivers flow
and into the beautiful dwellings in the Gardens of Eden.
This will be a great success!
13* There is something else that will delight you —
God's help and a rapid victory.
So announce the good news to the believers!

14* O you who have believed!
Be God's helpers.

When Jesus, son of Mary, said to the Apostles:
"Who are my helpers in God's way?"
The Apostles said:
"We are God's helpers!"
Then some of the Children of Israel believed,
and some did not believe.
We gave to the believers power against their enemies,
and they prevailed.

V. 2-3: Accusation directed at the Muslims who withdrew at the battle of Uhud.

V. 6: Jesus aimed his preaching only at the Jews (Matt. 10: 5,6; 15:24). God has promised them "another Comforter" (John 14: 16; 15:26), predicting the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. "He" refers either to Jesus or to the Prophet Ahmad (Muhammad).

V. 13: "A rapid victory" — the return of the Prophet to Mecca.

V. 14: Cf. a similar question to the Apostles in S.3:52-53. The Koran praises the Christians for vindicating the teachings of Jesus. Not only did Christianity win after vicious persecutions, but it became one of the main religions that united whole nations, while the Jews were scattered all over the world.

SURA 63 THE HYPOCRITES. ***After addressing Christianity and the Jews, the Prophet fought the Hypocrites (munafiqun) who supported the old ways of life, dodged the draft, and promoted civil disobedience. Building a monolithic Muslim community and nation became a necessity.***

63. THE HYPOCRITES
Medinan, 11 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* — [O Muhammad!] When the Hypocrites come to you,
they say:
"We testify that you're really the Messenger of God."
Yes! God knows that you are really His Messenger,
and God testifies that the Hypocrites are liars!
2. With their oaths as shields,
they turn [men] away from the path of God.
Verily, evil are their deeds!

3. They have accepted faith, then they rejected it.
Their hearts are sealed, and they cannot understand!
4* When you look at them, they charm you by their appearance.
But listen to the words they speak!
They are like propped up logs,
for them every call is hostile.
They are your enemies, so beware of them
and let God dispose of them, for deep is their deceit!

5. When told:
"Come, God's Messenger will pray for your forgiveness,"

they shake their heads.
Look with what arrogance they turn away.
6. They do not care if you pray
or do not pray for their forgiveness
because God will not forgive them.
Verily, God does not guide sinful people!

7. They say:
"Don't contribute to the followers of the Messenger of God,
because they will abandon him soon!"
The treasuries of Heavens and earth belong to God,
but the Hypocrites do not understand [it].
8* They say:
"When we return to Medina, the most honorable ones
will expel the least honorable ones."
But all honor is with God,
His Messenger, and the believers,
albeit the Hypocrites do not know [it].

9* O you who have believed!
Do not let your property and your children
divert you from remembering God!
The one who allows it will sustain a loss.

10. Spend from what We have provided you with
before death comes to any one of you, and he says:
"O my Lord! Had you given me a short respite,
I would've distributed alms and joined the upright!"

11. But God will not respite any soul after her term is up!
God is well informed of [all] you do.

V. 1: The Hypocrites (spelled with a capital letter because they are the name of a party) were such a serious opposition to Islam that they are mentioned in several late suras (S.59:11; S.33:1,73; S.48:6; S.57:13; S.9:64,67,101). They are described in detail in S.4:88,138,142,145.

V. 4: "They are like buttressed logs," i.e., they are weak as supports.

V. 8: Medina, originally **Yathrib**, whose full name is "**al-Medina-al-munauara**" (the Illuminated City) is the second holiest city of Islam. The Prophet was born in an inconspicuous spot near Mecca, but he spent his most productive years in Medina, a city that was often attacked by Meccans and hostile surrounding tribes. Inside the city he had to face the opposition of warring factions, indolent bedouins and unreliable "Hypocrites" among his own kinsmen. It is there, in Medina, that the Prophet resided and died, it is there that Islam was really born. The fourth Khalif, 'Ali, moved the capital of Islam from Medina to Kufa situated in modern Iraq.

The original modest mosque in Medina in which the Prophet and the first three Khalifs are buried has been rebuilt several times until it has become a vast and richly decorated place of worship and pilgrimage. In the twentieth century, most of the old city was razed and replaced by an agglomeration of modern buildings, shopping centers, and hotels linked by streets and highways.

Vv. 9-11: These verses seem to be out of context. They might have found their way to S.63 from some other sura.

SURA 4 (II) WOMEN. ***The second part of S.4 belongs to the post-Uhud period (3 H). Its emphasis is on military affairs and the consolidation of the power of Islam. The sura also deals with the status of women and castigates the Hypocrites and the Jews (vv. 153-170), as well as the Christians (vv. 171-175). Its last verse (v. 176) is a post-script to the inheritance laws.*** ***Part I of S.4 starts on p. 427.***

4. W O M E N

Meccan, 176 verses

Part II. Vv. 61-104.

61. — [O Muhammad!] When the Hypocrites are told:
"Come to what has been sent down by God,
[come] to the Messenger,"
you see with what contempt they turn away from you.
62. And what will happen if misfortune befalls them
for what their hands have done?
Then they will come to you and swear by God:
"We want only goodness and conciliation!"
63. God knows what is in their hearts.
So, stay away from them,
but admonish them with words
that can reach into their souls.

64. We have been sending each Messenger
to be obeyed by everyone as God wills.
If they came to you after they had wronged themselves,
and ask for God's forgiveness,
or if the Messenger pleaded to forgive them,
they would have found
that God is relenting and merciful!

65. But no, [I swear] by your Lord!
They will not believe until they make you
the arbiter of their disputes,
[until they] stop resisting your decisions in their minds,
and submit to them in full submission.

66. If We have commanded them to sacrifice their lives
or to abandon their dwellings,
only a few would have done it.
Yet, how much better it would have been for them
if they had done what was expected of them!

They would have grown [in faith],
67. and We would have given them Our great reward
68. and would have guided them on the straight path.
69. Those who obey God and the Messenger

are with the Prophets, the Truthful,
the Martyrs, and the Righteous,
with those upon whom God has bestowed [His] Grace —
excellent is this fellowship!
70. This is the Grace of God,
and sufficient is God, the all-knowing!

71. O you who have believed!
Be on the alert and go forward
only in detachments or in a body.
72. There will always be a laggard among you
who would say if you were defeated:
"God has done me the favor
of not becoming a martyr like you!"
73* But had God given you a victory,
he would have surely said,
pretending there was love between you and him:
"What a pity that I hadn't been with you,
then great would have been my success!"

74. Let those who exchanged this life for the Hereafter
fight in the way of God!
To the one who is killed
while fighting in the way of God or is victorious,
We will soon give a great reward!
75* So why would you not fight in the way of God
for the weak men, women and children, and those who say:
"O our Lord! Help us to get away from this city
where they oppress us.
Give us a protector from Yourself,
give us a helper from Yourself!"

76. The believers fight in the way of God,
and the disbelievers fight in the way of Taghut.
So fight against Satan's friends —
verily, the plots of Satan are hanging by a thread!

77* Have you not seen those who were told
to restrain their hands [from the booty],
to observe the prayer, and to pay the zakat?
When they were ordered to fight,
some of them feared men
as much as they feared God and even more.
They said:
"O our Lord! Why have You ordered us to fight?
You had better given us a short respite!"
Say:
"Brief is the enjoyment of this life.
The Hereafter is better for the God-fearing
and you won't be wronged by the skin of a date pit.
78* Death can overtake you anywhere,
even if you climb the loftiest towers."

When a benefit comes their way, they say:
"It's from God."
And when they experience evil, they say:
"[O Prophet], that's from you!"
Say:
"It's all from God!"
What is the matter with these people
that they do not understand simple words?
79. Whatever benefit comes your way is from God,
whatever evil befalls you is from yourself.

We have sent you as a Messenger to the people,
and God is sufficient as a Witness!
80. Whoever obeys the Messenger is obeying God,
and if some of them turn away,
We have not sent you to be their guardian!
81. They say:
"We obey!"
Yet after they leave you, some of them spend the night
discussing things that you did not say.
God keeps a record of their nightly [palavers],
and you, stay clear of them and put your trust in God.
God is sufficient as a Trustee!

82. Why do they not ponder over the Koran?
If it were not from God,
they would have found it full of contradictions.

83. When some news reaches them, reassuring or alarming,
they spread it around.
It would have been better to report it to the Messenger
or to the men in command in their midst
who would have cleared it thoroughly.
If it were not for God's favors to you and His mercy,
many of you would have followed Satan.
84. But you are responsible only for yourself.
So fight in God's way and inspire the believers!
God might curtail the fury of the disbelievers —
indeed, God is the strongest in wrath
and the toughest in punishment.

85. Whoever supports a good cause
shall be recompensed for it.
Whoever supports an evil cause
shall carry a part of its burden.
In truth, God has power over everything.
86. Return a salutation with a better or equal salutation.
Verily, God keeps count of everything.

87. God!... There is no god but Him!
He will surely gather you together on Judgment Day,
about which there is no doubt.
So whose Words are truer than God's?

88* Why have you split into two parties
regarding the Hypocrites?
Indeed, God has crushed them for their deeds.
Do you hope to put on the [right] path
those whom God has sent astray?
For those whom God has sent astray
you will never find the [right] path!

89. They wish you renounced faith and became like them.
So do not befriend any one of them
until they emigrate [from Mecca] in the cause of God.
But if they betray [you], catch them and slay them
any place you find them.
And do not take defenders or helpers from their midst,
90* except those who had joined your allies,
and whose conscience will prevent them
from fighting you and their own people.
Had God so willed, He would have given them power over you
and then they would have surely fought against you,
but if they retreat without a fight and offer you peace,
then God will not give you a pretext to attack them.

91* You shall also meet those who will seek
to earn your confidence and that of their people.
But each time they are called to rebellion,
they throw themselves into it!
If they do not withdraw from you, do not offer you peace,
and do not restrain their hands,
then capture and kill them any place you find them!
We give you full authority over them.

92* A believer should never kill a believer, unless by accident.
Anyone who kills a believer by accident
should free a believing slave
and pay the blood money to the [victim's] family,
unless they refuse it out of good will.
If [the victim] is a believer from a hostile people,
then [it is enough] to free a believing slave,
but if he belongs to a people allied to you,
then pay the blood money to his family
and free a believing slave.
Those for whom this is beyond their means
should fast two consecutive months in repentance to God.
God is truly all-knowing and wise!

93. Anyone who kills a believer intentionally
will be rewarded with Hellfire as an everlasting abode.
The wrath and the curse of God shall be upon him —
a great punishment is ready for him.

94* O you who have believed!
Be discriminating when you go forth in the way of God.
Do not tell someone who greets you with peace:

"You're a disbeliever,"
seeking for yourself some fleeting profit in this life.
Indeed, the greatest spoils are with God!
And you were like them before God granted you His favors.
So, be discriminating!
Verily, God is well aware of what you do.

95. Do not consider as equals the believers who remained behind
without exposing themselves to danger and those
who strive in the way of God with their property and person.
Those who strive with their property and person,
God raises to higher degrees than those who remain behind.
God has promised goodness, and God will distinguish those
who fight from those who stayed behind by a great reward —
96. by degrees [of distinction], forgiveness, and mercy.
Truly, God is forgiving and merciful!

97* When the Angels are carrying away
those who damaged their souls, they shall say to them:
"How was it there, for you?"
They shall say:
"We've been oppressed in the land."
The Angels shall say:
"The land of God is broad, you could have settled elsewhere!"
Their abode shall be Hellfire — what a bad outcome!

98. But the weak among men, women, and children
who are deprived of means and guidance,
99. let them hope that God will pardon them,
for God is exonerating and forgiving!

100. Whoever emigrates in the way of God
shall find many shelters and a great expanse on earth.
Whoever leaves his home to follow God and His Messenger
and meets with death,
shall receive a sure reward from God.
In truth, God is forgiving and merciful!

101. When you travel about in the land,
there is no fault upon you
if you shorten the prayer
fearing molestation from disbelievers —
indeed, disbelievers are your open enemies.

102. — [O Muhammad], when you are leading in prayer,
let a part of [the troops] stand
beside you with their weapons.
After they complete their prostrations,
make them stand behind you.
Then let those who have not prayed yet
come forward and pray with you,
keeping their weapons and taking all precautions.
The disbelievers are waiting

until you put down your weapons and equipment
to attack you in one drive.
However, there will be no fault upon you
if you lay your weapons aside
because of rain or illness,
while taking all precautions.
Verily, God has prepared a humiliating punishment
for the disbelievers.

103*If you skip the prayer, remember God
standing, sitting, or on your side.
And when you feel secure again,
stand up for prayer, indeed,
the believers ought to pray at definite hours.

104.Do not be lax in seeking the enemy —
if you suffer, they suffer like you.
But you hope in God,
and they have nothing to hope for.
In truth, God is all-knowing and wise.

Part II. Vv. 135-176.

135.O you who have believed!
Stand for justice and be witnesses before God,
even against your parents or relatives,
even against yourselves.
God is the Protector of the rich and the poor.
Do not follow your passions, but hold onto [the Truth]
to avoid evading [justice] or swerving from it,
verily, God knows everything you do.

136.O you who have believed!
Believe in God and His Messenger,
and in the Scripture He has sent down to His Messenger
and in the Scripture He had sent down before.
Whoever denies God, His Angels, His Scriptures,
His Messengers, and the Last Day, is gone far astray.

137*God will not forgive or guide on the [right] path
those who have believed, then disbelieved;
then believed again, then disbelieved,
and continued to sink into disbelief.
138.Announce the good tidings to the Hypocrites
that a painful retribution is ready for them.

139.And those who befriend disbelievers instead of believers,
do they expect that they will honor them?
No! Verily, all honors are with God.

140.[God] has already revealed to you in the Scripture
that if you hear that some people deny and mock
the Verses of God, you should not sit beside them

until they speak of something else;
otherwise you would be like them.
Verily, God will gather in Hell
all the Hypocrites and the disbelievers!

141. They are the ones who are watching you —
when God grants you victory, they say:
"Were we not on your side?"
But when success is on the disbelievers' side,
they say to them:
"Aren't you indebted to us
for defending you against the believers?"
God will judge between you on Resurrection Day,
and God will never allow the disbelievers
to overcome the believers.

142. Verily, the Hypocrites try to double-cross God,
but it is He, Who will double-cross them!
They stand in prayer indolently,
thinking not so much of God,
as of showing off before the people.
143. They waver, not knowing which side to join.
You will never find a way
for those whom God has sent astray!

144. O you who have believed!
Do not befriend disbelievers over the believers
if you do not want to provide God
with a clear case against yourselves.

145* Verily, the Hypocrites will be in the lower circle of Fire,
and you will not find any helper for them.
146. But not for those who repent, amend their ways,
hold fast to God, and purify their religion for God's sake —
they are the ones who are with the believers,
and soon God will give the believers a great reward.
147. Why would God punish you if you are grateful and believing?
In truth, God is appreciative and all-knowing!

148. God does not like if someone broadcasts evil,
except if he himself has been treated unjustly.
In truth, God is hearing and all-knowing!

149. Whether you divulge a good deed or conceal it,
whether you forgive evil...
verily, God is forgiving and powerful!

150. Verily, those who reject God and His Messengers
wish to separate God from His Messengers, and they say:
"We believe in some and reject the others,"
and they seek a middle way.

151* In truth they are disbelievers, and for the disbelievers

We have prepared a humiliating punishment.
152. We will soon give their reward
to those who believe in God and His Messengers
and make no distinction between them.
In truth, God is forgiving and merciful!

153. The People of the Scripture ask you
to descend upon them a Scripture from Heaven.
They had asked even more of Moses, saying:
"Show us God as He is!"

A thunderbolt struck them for their blasphemy!
After receiving the clear Proofs, they worshiped a calf.
Even then, We pardoned them and gave Moses a firm authority.

154. We raised a mountain over them
as a Sign of the Covenant, and We said to them:
— Prostrate yourselves when you enter the gate!
We [also] said to them:
— Do not violate the Sabbath!
We concluded with them a solemn Covenant,
155*but they broke the Covenant, rejected God's Signs,
murdered some Prophets unjustly, and said:
"Closed are our hearts!" How weak is their faith!

God put a seal upon them for their disbelief,
156*for departing from faith, for viciously slandering Mary,
157*and for their words:
"We're the ones who killed the Messiah,
Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God."
But they did not kill or crucify him: they just imagined it.
Verily, those who argue about that are full of doubts.
They have no knowledge about it — they are just guessing,
as it is certain that they have not killed him.
158. No! God has raised him up to Himself —
indeed, God is mighty and wise!

159*Verily, among the People of the Scripture
there is not a single one
who will not believe [in Jesus] before he dies.
On Judgment Day he will be a witness against them.

160*For their iniquity We have forbidden the Jews
some food that was [previously] allowed to them.
They were turning [people] away from God's way.
161. They practiced usury, although it was forbidden to them,
and consumed people's wealth under false pretenses.
For those among them who disbelieve,
We have prepared a painful punishment.
162. But soon We will give a great reward
to those who are firm in Knowledge
and believe in what has been revealed to you,
and what had been revealed before you;

to those who observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and believe in God and the Last Day.

163. Verily, We are inspiring you, as We inspired Noah
and the Prophets who followed him.
Thus We have inspired Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob,
the tribes [of Israel], Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron,
Solomon, and David to whom We gave the Psalter —
164. all the Messengers We have already mentioned to you
and others We have not mentioned.
And with Moses God spoke face to face!
165. [We have inspired] the Messengers
who brought good tidings and Warnings
so that after the [admonition] of the Messengers,
people would not have any case against God.
Indeed, God is mighty and wise!
166* God witnesses that what has been revealed to you
has been revealed with His Knowledge.
The Angels are witnessing it too,
albeit God is sufficient as a witness.

167. Verily, those who renounce faith and turn [others]
from God's path have strayed far away.
168. Verily, God does not forgive those
who disbelieve and do wrong;
He does not guide them to a way
169. other than the way to Hellfire,
their everlasting abode — that is easy for God!

170. O people!
The Messenger came to you
with the Truth from your Lord,
therefore, you better believe!
But if you disbelieve....
Everything in heavens and earth belongs to God.
God is all-knowing and wise!
171* O People of the Book!
Do not trespass the limits of your religion
and do not say about God anything but the Truth.
Indeed, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,
is only a Messenger of God, He is His Word sent to Mary,
and a Spirit from Himself.
So believe in God and His Messengers and do not say:
"[They are] a trinity" —
do not do that, as God is truly One God,
and too exalted He is to have a son.
Everything in Heavens and earth belongs to Him,
and God is enough as a Protector.
172. Like the attending Angels,
the Messiah does not disdain to be a servant of God.
He will soon gather to Himself
those who disdain serving Him and are haughty.

173. He will reward those who have believed and done right;
He will add to them still more of His bounty,
but upon the haughty and the disdainful,
He will impose a painful punishment.
Besides God they shall find for themselves
neither a protector nor a helper.
174. O people!
There have come to you the Proofs from your Lord,
and the clear Light that We have sent down to you.
175. Those who have believed in God and firmly stand by Him,
He will soon admit to His mercy and to His bounty
and guide them to Himself on the straight path.

176*They ask you for a pronouncement [about inheritance].
Say:
"Here is God's pronouncement for those
who leave no parents and no offspring.
If a childless man dies leaving a sister,
she receives half of his inheritance.
If a childless woman [dies] leaving a brother,
he receives all of her inheritance.
If two [sisters] are left,
they share two-thirds of his estate.
If brothers and sisters are left,
then a man gets the share of two women."
God makes this clear to you, lest you err.
Indeed, God is aware of all things!

V. 75: "This city where they oppress us" is Mecca.

V. 77: "Restrain their hands..." — avoid rushing into battle.

V. 78: In spite of the doctrine of predestination, everyone is responsible for his/her misfortunes. Righteousness **(fitra)**, untainted by original sin, is the natural state of man (S.30:30).

V. 88: Some Muslims wanted to kill the Hypocrites; others to spare them. The next two verses offer a reasonable compromise.

V. 90: "Their conscience" or "their constrained hearts."

V. 91: The renegades in this verse are the Jews and the Hypocrites who intentionally stayed behind in Mecca.

V. 92: Blood money is a compensation, a fine, a ransom for a person killed unjustly.

V. 94: "Seeking some fleeting profit in this life for yourself" — robbing someone because he is not a Muslim.

V. 97: An injunction against the Muslims who stayed behind.

V. 103: "When you skip the prayer" or "after praying."

V. 137: The Jews doubted the Koran and ended up rejecting it.

V. 145: "A circle" or "a layer" of Fire.

Vv. 151-153: All Messengers, including Jesus, must be equally respected by the faithful.

V. 155: "Closed are our hearts" — "our hearts are under wraps" or "our hearts are uncircumcised" (cf. S.2:88).

V. 156: Mary was slandered by the rumor that Jesus was born out of wedlock.

V. 157: The idea that God could allow Jesus, a righteous man, suffer and die in ignominy for the sins of others was blasphemous for Muslims.

V. 159: "Will not believe in him [Jesus] before ***his [own]*** death," or "will not believe in him before ***his [Jesus's]*** death."

V. 160: The Muslim dietary laws are less restrictive than the Jewish ones.

V. 166: The expression "God is enough as a witness" is an answer to the Christian belief that God's will can be swayed by the testimony of Jesus, supplications to the Saints, and even prayers of ordinary people.

V. 171: "Do not trespass..." is an appeal to moderation.

V. 176: This verse completes the inheritance laws presented at the beginning of this sura (Part I, vv. 1-12). It is clearly an addition to the sura.

Although a division of some long suras into two or three parts according to their content, as has been done in this translation, undoubtedly facilitates reading and understanding, an extensive fragmentation of the Koran is unwarranted. Nevertheless, some scholars have submitted the Koran to an extensive deconstruction. Thus, a medieval Azeri student of the Koran, Ibn Hasan, whose work was translated to Russian (ChG, see Bibliography), has divided the Koran into 133 parts in the numerological belief that the number of suras should be 19x7= 137 and not 19x6= 114. He called his 137 chapters suras, but wrongly, because the word sura is specifically attached to the canonical Koran (chapters imply a division by subject matter — which is what he attempted to achieve). He also transferred a few verses or even one half of a verse from one sura to another one (e.g., vv. 158, 196-part of 200, and 203 from S.2 to S.22. Out of S.4 he carved four "suras": ***Women*** (vv. 1-35; 127-130; 176), ***The Weight of a Speck of Dust*** (vv. 36-42), ***The Membrane of a Date*** (vv. 43-70), and ***The Blessing*** (vv. 71-126; 131-175). A comparison with Rodwell (JMR) shows that the English author, without mentioning his source, has practically copied the order in which Ibn Hasan listed his chapters of the Koran.

SURA 59 EXPULSION. ***S.59 deals with the division of spoils after the defeat of the Jewish tribes Bani Qainuqa' and Bani Nadir (4 H). It was necessary then to quell any dissension among the four groups of Muslims: 1) the Muhajjirun, of Meccan descent, who accompanied the Prophet to Medina; 2) the Ansar — the Muslims native to Medina; 3) the recent emigrants from Mecca, who joined the Muhajjirun; and 4) the party of the Hypocrites who refused to fight. The gathering of Muslims was opposed by an armed "confederation" of plotters. Emigration (hijra) has the same root as Muhajjirun. The Muslim calendar starts at the hijra to Medina in 620.***

59. EXPULSION
Medinan, 24 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Everything in Heavens and earth glorifies God.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

2* He is the One Who at the first expulsion
evicted from their dwellings

those who had not believed
among the People of the Scripture.
You did not think that they would leave,
and they thought that their strongholds
will defend them from God.
Yet God came upon them from unexpected quarters
and brought [such] a terror into their hearts
that their dwellings were destroyed by their own hands
and the hands of the believers.
This is a warning for those who have eyes to see!

3. If God had not decreed their expulsion,
He would have certainly punished them in this world,
and in the Hereafter He will punish them by the Fire
4. for their opposition to God and His Messenger.
Verily, God is severe in punishing
anyone who opposes God.
5* If you have cut down [their] young palm-trees,
leaving some of them on their roots,
that was done by God's decree
to humiliate the reprobates.

6* You did not have to go on a campaign
on horseback or camelback
to get what God [took away] from them
and gave to His Messenger.
God gives power to His Messengers as He wills.
God has power over all things.
7* The spoils from the townspeople
that God gave to His Messenger belong to God,
His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans,
the poor, and the wayfarers.
They should not be allocated to the rich among you.
Take what the Messenger gives you
and abstain from what he withholds from you.
And fear God — verily, God is severe in punishment!
8. [A part] of the spoils is for the indigent emigrants
who lost their dwellings and property,
while seeking God's bounty and approval,
and who were assisting God and His Messenger.
They are the sincere ones!

9* Those who owned houses [in Medina] and adopted the faith,
love those who emigrated to [their city],
and they do not covet what has been given to them.
Although they are poor themselves,
they put their needs above their own.
Successful shall be those
who free themselves of greed!
10. And those who emigrated after them say:
"O our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers
who came to faith before us,
and don't leave in our hearts

any ill-feelings toward the believers.
O our Lord! Verily, You're full of kindness and mercy!"

11* Do you not know what the Hypocrites say
to their disbelieving brothers
among the People of the Scripture:
"If they exile you, surely we'll follow you.
We'll never obey anyone in what concerns you,
and if you're attacked, surely we'll help you!"
God is witness that they are liars!

12. If they are expelled,
[the Hypocrites] will not follow them
and will never help them if they are attacked.
And if they helped them, they would betray them
and leave them without support.
13. Indeed, God has filled their hearts with a fear of you
that is stronger than their fear of God —
these people do not understand.

14. They will not fight you in a body,
but only inside fortified towns or hiding behind walls.
Strong is the rivalry among them.
You think that they are united,
yet their hearts are apart,
but these people do not think.
15* They shall taste the evil of their actions
like their immediate predecessors.
A painful punishment is [prepared] for them.

16. And such is Satan who said to a man:
"Deny [God]!"
And when [the man] denied, he said:
"Now I'm repudiating you
because I'm afraid of God, the Lord of the Worlds."
17. Both shall end up in the Fire
where they will abide for ever.
Such is the reward of the sinners!

18* O you who have believed!
Fear God!
Let each soul consider
what she has prepared for tomorrow.
Fear God! Verily, God is well informed of your deeds.
19. Do not be like those who have forgotten God
and [God] made them forget themselves.
Indeed, they are reprobates!
20. Can one compare the inmates of the Fire
to the dwellers of Paradise?
The dwellers of Paradise are the ones to succeed.

21. If We descended this Koran upon a mountain,

you would see how it will humble itself
and split asunder out of fear of God.
Such are the examples We bring up to the people —
perhaps they will reflect!

22* He is God!
There is no god, but Him.
He knows the hidden and the revealed.
He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.
23. He is God!
There is no god, but Him.
He is the Sovereign, the Holy One,
the Source of Peace, the Guardian of Faith,
the Observer of security, the Mighty,
the Powerful, the Most High.
Glory to God!
[Exalted] He is above what they associate with Him!
24. He is God, the Creator, the Builder, the Source of Harmony.
To Him belong the most beautiful Names.
Everything in Heavens and earth glorifies Him!
He is the Mighty, the Wise.

V. 2: "At the first expulsion." Expulsion in Arabic is **hashr**, which also means "assembly" or "gathering." If gathering is meant, here, it may refer both to the Muslims and to their enemies who were mustering their forces at the time. The Jewish tribe **Bani Nadir** was forced to leave the vicinity of Medina after Uhud (4 H).

V. 5: The palm groves belonged to the Bani Nadir, who might have destroyed them during their retreat.

Vv. 6-8: The lands confiscated from the Jews were not considered to be spoils of war, as they were lands previously seized by the Jews from their rightful owners.

V. 7: The Muslims justify the expulsion of the Jews by the fact that they were recent immigrants who could not be assimilated into the local Arabian communities for cultural reasons. The creation of a stable community destined to become a nation required, besides funds, discipline and full respect for Islam.

Many Koranic verses like this one speak of the high standing of the Prophet beside God, but the Prophet is not the object of a cult. The only celebration dedicated to Muhammad is his birthday (Mawlid an-Nabi on 12 Rabi' al-Awal), which is remembered only in some localities, with no ritual is attached to it.

Vv. 9-10: The late Emigrants are the Meccan defectors to the Prophet's side after his first victories.

V. 11: The Hypocrites were accused of betraying Islam by seeking a trade accommodation with the Jews.

V. 15: The "predecessors" referred to are **Bani Qainuqa'** — the first Jewish tribe to be defeated by the Muslims.

V. 18: "Tomorrow," probably, on Judgment Day.

Vv. 22-24: A doxology often quoted by Muslims (cf. S.24: 41). It contains several of God's Names, which describe some facets of His nature but do not explain who He is. The ineffable God (S.37:180) is the ***total reality*** (S.20:114; S.4:171), but He cannot be understood by

man (S.37:180). Nevertheless, a man stripped by God of his veils can feel His Presence and understand the deep sense of life and things (S.17:4; S.29:64).

God is the Holy One, Whose Oneness is His highest attribute, as stated in S.112, which every Muslim must know by heart. The statement that the Koran is easy to remember (S.54:17) is taken so seriously that thousands of faithful achieve the feat of committing the whole Book to memory.

SURA 48 VICTORY. ***This sura was revealed between the disappointing expedition of the Muslims against the Meccans at Hudabiya (6 H),which ended with the treaty of the same name, and a successful operation at Khaybar (7 H). Therefore, victory and defeat alternate from passage to passage. The sura criticizes the nomadic Arabs (the Bedouins) who defected at Hudabiya (vv. 11-12 and 15-16).***

48. VICTORY
Medinan, 29 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* Verily, We have granted you a decisive victory,
2. so that God would forgive your past and future sins,
fulfill His goodness to you,
guide you on the straight path,
3. and sustain you by a mighty help.

4* He is the One, Who has sent Assurance
into the hearts of the believers
to add still more belief to their belief.
To God belong the hosts of Heavens and earth.
In truth, God is all-knowing and wise!

5. He will admit the believers,
men and women, into the Gardens
under which the rivers flow
to abide in them for ever.
He will absolve them from evil deeds.
In the eyes of God this is truly a great success!

6. He will punish the Hypocrites, men and women,
and the Associators, men and women.
Their evil ideas about God encircle them in evil.
The wrath of God is upon them. He has cursed them
and prepared for them Hellfire —
what an evil outcome!
7* To God belong the hosts of Heavens and earth.
God is truly all-mighty and wise!

8. — [O Muhammad!] We have sent you as a witness,

a carrier of good news, and a Warner
9. to let everyone believe in God and His Messenger,
assist Him, and glorify Him mornings and evenings.
10. Verily, those who pledge allegiance to you,
pledge allegiance to God.
The hand of God is over their hands!
Whoever breaks an oath, breaks it to his soul's harm,
and whoever fulfills his Covenant with God
shall soon receive from Him a great reward.

11* The Arab nomads who stayed behind will say to you:
"We've to mind our property and households,
so ask forgiveness for us."
Their tongues say what is not in their hearts.
Say:
"Then, who would intercede before God in your behalf
if He intended to hurt or benefit you?"
God is truly well aware of your deeds.
12. You thought that the Messenger and the believers
will never return to their households.
This was a bad idea made attractive to your hearts.
And now you are a people of losers!
13. We have prepared a Fire for the disbelievers
who have not believed in God and His Messenger!
14. God is the Sovereign of Heavens and earth.
He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills.
God is truly forgiving and merciful!

15* When you will set forth for the spoils,
those who stayed behind will say:
"Allow us to follow you!"
This is how they wish to breach God's decision!
Say:
"No! You'll not go with us, as God has already told you!"
Then they will say:
"You envy us!"
How little do they understand!
16. Say to the Arab nomads who stayed behind:
"You'll be called against a people skilled in violent war,
and you'll have to fight them till they surrender.
If you obey, God will give you a good reward,
but if you betray, as you've betrayed before,
He'll punish you by a painful retribution."

17. There is no blame upon the blind, as there is no blame
upon the lame and the sick [for not fighting].
[God] will admit whoever obeys God and His Messenger
into the Gardens under which the rivers flow,
and if any one retreats,
He will punish him by a painful retribution.

18* God has been satisfied with the believers
when they pledged you allegiance under a tree.

He knew what was in their hearts
and He sent the Sakina down upon them.
He will reward them with an upcoming victory
19. and a rich booty that will be their lot.
God is truly mighty and wise!

20. God promised you a rich booty that will be your lot.
He rushed it to you,
while restraining from you the people's hands,
so that it might become a Sign for the believers,
and He might guide you to the straight path.
21. And there is another booty not within your reach —
it is in the power of God.
God truly has power over all things!

22. If the disbelievers fight you, they will surely retreat
without finding a protector or a helper.
23. Such was God's decree in the past,
and you will find no change in God's decrees!

24. He is the One, Who in the valley of Mecca has restrained
their hands from you and your hands from them
after He had granted you victory over them.
God truly sees well all that you do.

25* They are among the ones who disbelieved, kept you away
from the Sacred Mosque, and prevented animal offerings
from reaching their destination.
But [had you fought] at the time,
you could have unknowingly trampled
some believing men and believing women,
thus unwillingly committing sin.
God [has restrained your hands]
to admit to His mercy anyone He chooses.
If [the believers] had stood apart,
We would have certainly inflicted
a severe punishment upon the disbelievers.

26* While the disbelievers were filling their hearts
with violence — the violence of the time of Ignorance,
God has been sending down
His Sakina upon His Messenger and the believers.
They deserved it and were worthy of it.
[God] made them respect the word of devotion.
God is truly well aware of all things!

27. God has truly fulfilled His Messenger's vision!
God willing, you shall enter the Sacred Mosque
in full security, your heads shaven,
your hair cut short, and without fear.
[God] knew what you did not know.
And besides that, He granted you a speedy victory.

28. He is the One Who has sent His Messenger
with Guidance and the religion of Truth
to exalt it above all religions.
Sufficient is God as a witness!

29* Muhammad is God's Messenger.
His followers are firm with the disbelievers
and compassionate to one another.
You see how they bow and prostrate themselves,
hoping for God's favors and [His] approval.
Their faces are marked by the traces of prostrations.
This is how they are represented in the Torah.
Their image in the Evangel is a sprouting seed.
It grows strong and becomes a straight stalk
that pleases the sowers and angers the disbelievers.
To those who have believed and have done good works,
God has promised forgiveness and a great reward.

V. 1: The first three verses are addressed directly to the Prophet Muhammad. The "decisive victory" is the treaty by which the Quraish recognized Islam as a lawful power in Arabia.

V. 4: "Reassurance," **sakina**, cf. S.48:26, S.2:248.

V. 7: "The hosts," "the armies," or "the forces."

V. 11: The Bedouins asked to be excused from conscription.

V. 15: "As God has said before" (cf. S.8:1). "Those who stayed behind" — the Bedouins who defected in battle.

V. 18: "When they pledged you allegiance under a tree": the treaty of Hudabiya (6 H). The victory is that of **Khaybar** (7 H).

V. 25: In battle, the advancing Muslims could not discern the believers from the disbelievers. God interfered to save innocent bystanders.

At the reading of this verse, as well as S.41:37 and S.96:19, it is customary to bow and prostrate oneself.

V. 26: "Respect the word of devotion" — show self-restraint.

V. 29: A rare mention of the Prophet's name. The mark is the dark spot on the forehead produced by contact with the floor or the soil during prostrations. Moses and Aaron "fell on their faces" (Num. 16:22); "The angels... fell... on their faces"(Rev. 7:11).

SURA 57 THE IRON. ***S.57 preaches humility before God and dismisses servility before men. It describes the virtues of a true Muslim and reiterates the calls to contributions (vv. 7, 10-11, 17). In v.25, iron may be a symbol of strength. If the victory alluded to in v.10 is the conquest of Mecca, S.57 could be dated as late as 8 H.***

57. THE IRON
Medinan, 29 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. Everything in Heavens and earth glorifies God.
He is the Mighty, the Wise.
2. To Him belongs the Dominion of Heavens and earth.
He gives life and death.
He has power over all things.
3. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Unseen.
He is well aware of everything.

4* He is the One Who has created the Heavens and the earth
in six days and then established Himself on the Throne.
He knows what goes into the earth
and what comes out of it,
what descends from the sky and what ascends to it.
He is with you, wherever you are!
God sees everything you do!

5. To Him belongs the Dominion of Heavens and earth.
[All] matters return to God.
6. He merges the night with the day
and merges the day with the night.
He knows best what is in the hearts.

7* Believe in God and His Messenger,
and contribute from what you have inherited from Him.
Those of you who believe and contribute
shall receive a great reward.

8. What prevents you from believing in God?
The Messenger is calling upon you to believe in your Lord,
Who accepted your pledge that you will not cease to believe.

9. He is the One, Who sends clear Proofs down to His servant
to let him bring you from darkness to Light.
Verily, God is full of kindness and mercy for you!

10* What prevents you from contributing to the cause of God?
Indeed, the Heavens and the earth are God's Dominion!
Those who gave and fought before victory are much higher
in rank than those who gave and fought after it,
but God has promised goodness to everyone.
God is well aware of your deeds.

11. Whoever lends a good loan to God, [God] will double it,
and he shall receive a noble reward.
12* On [that] Day you shall see how Light will stream
from believing men and believing women
in front of them and to the right of them.
Good tidings for you today:
Gardens under which the rivers flow
to abide in them for ever; this is the highest achievement!

13. On [that] Day the Hypocrites, men and women,
shall say to the believers:

"Wait for us, we want to borrow some of your Light!"
— Go back to search for [your] Light!
Then a wall with a gate shall arise between them
with mercy inside and punishment outside.
14. They shall call out:
"Were we not with you?"
— Yes, you were, but you fell into temptation,
you waited, you doubted, and your wishes deceived you.
When God issued His Decision,
the Deceiver deceived you about God.
15. Today no ransom shall be taken from you or the disbelievers!
Your abode is the Fire — what an evil outcome!

16* Is it not time for the believers
to humble their hearts at the remembrance of God
and at the descent of Truth upon them, and to stop
emulating those who had received the Scripture in the past,
and whose hearts had hardened so much in the long run
that many of them became reprobate.
17. Know that God can revive the earth after it has died.
We have already shown you the Signs —
perhaps you will understand!
18* Verily, charitable men and women who lend to God a good loan
shall receive twice as much in return
with a liberal reward on top.
19* For their Lord, those who believe in God and His Messengers
are the Keepers of Truth and the Witnesses [of Faith] who
will get their reward and their Light, but those who denied
God and rejected Our Signs will dwell in Hellfire.

20* Let you know that this life is only sport and fun,
embellishment, bragging among yourselves,
and competition for more wealth and more children.
An example for you is the rain that causes a sprout
to burst forth to the delight of the grower.
But soon it withers and you see
how it yellows and turns into stubble.
There is a severe punishment in the Hereafter,
but also God's forgiveness and approval.
And this life is only a deceiving contentment.
21. So, compete with one another
in [seeking] the forgiveness of your Lord, and Paradise
which is as immense as the expanse of Heaven and earth.
It is for those who believed in God and His Messengers,
it is God's favor which He bestows upon anyone He wills.
God wields a mighty Grace!

22* There is no misfortune in the land or in your souls
that is not recorded in the Book before We let it happen.
Verily, this is easy for God!

23* Do not despair if something has passed by you
and do not exult over what you have received.

God does not love the arrogant braggarts
24. who are miserly themselves and urge people to stinginess!
And if anyone of them turns away…
then, verily, God is the Rich, the Praiseworthy.
25* And in the past We have been sending Our Messengers
with clear Proofs, the Book and the Balance
to let the people stand by justice.
We sent down iron for war and for the benefit of mankind.
God knows who secretly supports Him and His Messengers.
Verily, God is powerful and mighty!

26. We have sent Noah and Abraham and established
in their posterity the Prophetic gift and the Revelation.
Some of them followed the Guidance,
but many of them became reprobates.
27* We continued to send Our Messengers in their footsteps,
and then We sent Jesus, son of Mary,
We gave him the Evangel and put kindness and mercy
in the hearts of his followers.

We have not prescribed them monastic life,
which they have invented themselves,
but only the search of God's satisfaction.
Yet, they did not live up to expectations.
We gave their reward to those of them who believed,
but many of them became reprobates.

28. O you who have believed!
Fear God and believe in His Messenger.
Then [God] will give you a double portion of His mercy
and a Light for you to follow. He will forgive you —
indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

29. Let the People of the Scripture know
that they have no control over God's Grace —
it is in His hand, and He gives it to whomever He wills.
God is the Sovereign of abundant Grace!

V. 4: According to the Bible, God has created the world in six days, but in fact, he will continue to create and build it for ever. We cannot know what He will create in the future.

V. 7: "Contribute," i.e., give to charity.

V. 10: "The victory" is either the conquest of Mecca or one of the successful campaigns of the Prophet.

V. 12: "And the believing women" might be a later addition made to enhance the prestige of women.

V. 16: The Koran used to urge the faithful to fight relentlessly; now, after victory, it invites them to soften their hearts.

Vv. 18-19: The four degrees of nearness to God are: the Prophets (S.4:9), the Keepers of Truth, the Witnesses (v.19), and charitable people (v.18). The Keepers of Truth and the Witnesses are sources of Light by themselves.

Faith (**iman**) has four degrees of merit: submission to God following the example of everything He has created; individual and wholehearted submission; submission in fulfilling the prescriptions of religion; and total immersion in faith and good works.

V. 19: "The Witnesses" comprise the Martyrs.

V. 20: "The growers" — "the disbelievers" in the original.

V. 22: "The Book" is a record of all human actions.

Vv. 22-24: The misfortune alluded to is probably the defeat at Hudabiya. For this reason, even though S.57 resembles the Meccan suras, it is placed among the latest Medinan suras.

V. 23: A righteous person is as moderate in pain as in joy: he knows that both come from God.

V. 25: "The Scripture" is the Koran; "the Balance" allows to distinguish the right from the wrong, the valuable from the fake.

V. 27: Note the conciliatory tone towards Christians.

"They did not achieve what was expected from them": monks will never satisfy God because solitude is an unnatural way of life.

SURA 33 THE CONFEDERATES. ***S.33 deals essentially with two topics: the personal life of the Prophet (cf. S.66) and the failed attempt of the Confederation to take Medina (5 H). While the Quraish remained in Mecca, the other Confederates — the Jewish tribes, the Hypocrites, and the Bedouins — were defeated in the trenches dug by the Muslims around the city. The Jewish tribe Bani Quraiza lost its lands.***

33. *THE CONFEDERATES*
Medinan, 73 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. O Prophet! Fear God and do not yield
to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites!
Verily, God is all-knowing and wise!
2. Follow what is inspired to you by your Lord.
Verily, God is well informed of your deeds.
3. Trust God — God is sufficient as a Trustee.

4* God has not put two hearts inside a man's chest.
He has not changed into your mothers
the spouses you divorced by [the rite] of zihar,
and He has not made your adopted children your sons.
These are just words in your mouths,
but God speaks the Truth and guides on the [right] way.

5. Call [adopted sons] after their fathers:
that is more just in God's sight.
If you do not know who their fathers are,
then they are your brethren in faith
or your close friends.
There will be no fault upon you
if you have made a mistake in this matter,
unless it was intentional in your hearts.

In truth, God is forgiving and merciful!

6* The Prophet is closer to the believers
than they are to one another
and his wives are [like] mothers to them.

In the Book of God,
blood relatives are closer to one another
than the believers or the emigrants among themselves.
But you should treat your close friends kindly as well —
so it is written in the Book [of God].

7. Remember that We made a Covenant with the Prophets —
with you, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, son of Mary.
We made a solemn Covenant with them all,
8* so that [God] could question the Keepers of Truth
about their truthfulness.
He has prepared a painful punishment for the disbelievers.

9* O you who have believed!
Remember God's goodness to you
when you were besieged by armies.
We sent against them a violent storm,
and for your support — invisible hosts.
In truth, God sees well all what you do!
10. When they came upon you from above and below,
when [your] sight dimmed, and [your] hearts rose
to [your] throats, you began to have doubts about God.
11. Thus the believers were tested and jolted a tremendous jolt.

12. Then the Hypocrites and those with diseased hearts said:
"The promise of God and His Messenger is but a delusion."
13* Others among them said:
"O you, people of Yathrib! Go back!
This's not the place for you!"
Then some of them asked leave of the Prophet, saying:
"Our houses are in danger!"
But they were not in danger:
they just wanted to run away.

14. If [the enemies] surround them from all sides
and incite them to revolt,
they would certainly rally to them without delay.
15. Yet they had made a Covenant with God
that they will never betray.
They shall be accountable for their Covenant with God!

16. Say:
"Running away will not help you
if you run away from death or slaughter,
and even then, brief would be your enjoyment."
17. Say:
"Nobody would guard you from God if He wished you evil

or if He wished you mercy."
They shall not find any protector or helper besides God.
18. Indeed, God knows those of you
who restrain others [from fighting]
and those of you who say to their brothers:
"Rally to us!"
If they go out to fight,
it will be only for a short while,
19. and they will be full of envy towards you!
You will see them overcome with fear,
looking at you and rolling their eyes
as if death were hovering over them!
But when fear subsides, they will viciously lash at you
with [their] sharp tongues and covet the booty.
They have no faith, and God has nullified their deeds —
in truth, that is easy for God.

20. They think that the Confederates did not go away;
but if the Confederates returned,
they would go over to the Arab nomads in the desert
to gather information about you.
And if they stayed with you,
they would fight only for a short while.

21. Indeed, the Messenger of God is a good example
for those who rely upon God and the Last Day,
and frequently remember God.

22. When the believers saw the Confederates, they said:
"This is what God and His Messenger have warned us about.
God and His Messenger had been telling the truth!"
And this increased their belief and submission.

23. Some believers are true to their Covenant with God.
and are fulfilling their vow,
while others are waiting, but they firmly believe
24. that, God willing, He might reward
the Keepers of Truth for their truthfulness
and punish the Hypocrites or pardon them.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

25. God turned the disbelievers back in spite of their fury.
They gained no advantage —
indeed, God is sufficient for the believers in their fight.
God is truly powerful and mighty!
26. And those of the People of the Scripture
who supported [the Confederates], God chased them
from their strongholds and filled their hearts with terror.
You killed some of them and others you captured.

27* [God] let you inherit their lands, dwellings,
property, and a land you had not trodden [before].
In truth, God has power over all things!

28* — O Prophet! Tell your wives:
"If you desire the life of this world with its frills,
then come! I'll let you enjoy it
before sending you away graciously.
29. But if you desire God, His Messenger,
and the Last Abode, God will prepare a great reward
for those among you who do good."

30. — O wives of the Prophet!
If one of you commits an open indecency,
she shall receive a double punishment.
In truth, this is easy for God.
31. Those of you who are devoted to the service of God
and His Messenger and do good works
shall receive from Us a double reward —
We will prepare for them an ample provision.
32. — O wives of the Prophet!
You are not like other women.
If you fear God, do not talk too sweetly,
but talk in a dignified way,
lest you seduce someone with a corrupted heart.
33* Keep to your houses and avoid the showy garments
of the times of Ignorance. Observe the prayer,
pay the zakat, and obey God and His Messenger.
God wants to cleanse of pollution
you and your household, and to thoroughly purify you.

34. Remember the Verses of God
which are recited in your houses, and [His] Wisdom.
Verily, God is graceful and well-informed!

35* Verily, God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward
for Muslim men and women, believing men and women,
obedient men and women, truthful men and women,
patient men and women, humble men and women,
almsgiving men and women, chaste men and women,
and men and women who often remember Him.
God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.

36* Believing men or women should not take part
in the decisions made by God and His Messenger.
Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger
has really gone astray!

37* — [O Muhammad!] Remember how you said to [Zeid],
who had received God's grace and your favor:
"Keep your wife to yourself and be God-fearing."
But you concealed in your soul what God wanted to reveal.
You feared people instead of fearing God.
When Zeid divorced, We married you to [his wife]
to allow believers to marry without hindrance
the divorced wives of their adopted sons

after [their marriage] had been duly dissolved.
Thus God's Decision has been fulfilled.

38. There is no difficulty for the Prophet
in what God has assigned to him.
[Indeed], those who have already passed away
had also observed the Law of God.
God's Decision must be fulfilled!
39. [This is] for those who convey God's Messages,
who fear Him, and fear nobody but Him.
Sufficient is God to call to account!
40* Muhammad is not the father of any of your men.
He is God's Messenger and the seal of the Prophets.
God is fully aware of all things.

41. O you who have believed!
Remember God and do it frequently,
42. and glorify Him mornings and evenings.
43. He and His Angels are blessing you
to bring you out of the darkness into the Light.
He is truly merciful to the believers.
44. The Day they meet Him, their greeting shall be:
"Peace!"
He has prepared for them a generous reward.

45. — O Prophet! In truth, We have sent you as a Witness,
a Carrier of good news, and a Warner
46. who calls to God with His permission,
and as an illuminating Lamp.
47. Announce to the believers the good news
that they shall receive a great mercy from God.

48. Do not yield to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites,
disregard their insults and put your trust in God.
God is sufficient as a Trustee.

49* O you who have believed!
If you marry believing women,
and then divorce them before consummation,
you do not have to observe the waiting period.
Give them a gift
and let them go in an honorable way.

50* — O Prophet! We allowed you to marry
those to whom you have paid their dowries:
the slaves given to you by God as part of the spoils,
the daughters of paternal uncles and aunts,
the daughters of maternal uncles and aunts
who have emigrated with you [from Mecca],
and any believing woman ready to dedicate herself
to the Prophet if the Prophet desires to marry her.
This is for you, but not for the believers!
We know what We have commanded

in regard to their wives and slaves,
but you must be free of hindrance.
In truth, God is forgiving and merciful!

51* You may skip [the turn] of any [of your wives]
and receive any one you desire.
There will be no blame upon you if you invite
one of those [whose turn] you have skipped.
This is better to cool their eyes, to free them from grief,
and to satisfy them with what you are giving them.
God knows what is in your hearts.
In truth, God is all-knowing and forbearing!

52* You are not allowed in the future to marry again
or to replace your wives with others
whose beauty might strike you, except your slaves.
In truth, God is observing everything.

53* O you who have believed!
Enter the houses of the Prophet when invited for a meal,
but not while it is being prepared.
If invited, come in, and disperse after eating
without engaging in conversation
to avoid annoying the Prophet.
Otherwise he will feel embarrassed for you,
but God is not embarrassed by the truth!
When you ask [women] for some utensil,
ask from behind a curtain —
that is purer for your hearts and their hearts.
You should not annoy God's Messenger
and you should not marry his wives:
that would be outrageous in God's eyes.
54. Whatever you reveal, whatever you hide,
verily, God is fully aware of everything.

55* It is not sinful for [wives to appear unveiled]
before their fathers, their sons and their brothers,
their brothers' sons and sisters' sons,
and before their women, or their [female] slaves.
Let them fear God — verily, God is witness to all things.

56. Verily, God and His Angels are blessing the Prophet.
And you who have believed,
bless him and greet him a great greeting.
57. Verily, God has cursed in this world and in the Hereafter
those who slander God and His Messenger.
He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.
58. Those who undeservedly abuse believing men and women,
are guilty of calumny and obvious sin.

59* — O Prophet!
Tell your wives, your daughters, and believing women
to cover themselves with over-garments [when going out]:

this is more proper than to be recognized and abused.
God is truly forgiving and merciful!

60. If the Hypocrites, the diseased of heart,
and those who spread sedition in Medina do not desist,
We will surely rouse you against them,
and they shall cease to be your neighbors for long.
61. A curse will be upon them and they shall be captured
and utterly destroyed wherever they are found.
62. Such was God's Decree for those who lived before,
and you will not find any changes in God's Decrees.

63. People ask you about the Hour.
Say:
"[Only] God knows it!"
How can you know — perhaps the Hour is near!

64. Verily, God has cursed the disbelievers
and has prepared for them a blazing Fire
65. in which they shall dwell for ever.
And they shall not find any protector or helper.
66. The Day when the Fire distorts their faces,
they shall say:
"O woe to us! Why haven't we obeyed God,
why haven't we obeyed the Messenger?"
67. And they shall say:
"O our Lord! We've been obeying
our chiefs and our elite:
they are the ones who led us astray.
68. O our Lord! Double their punishment
and curse them a great curse!"

69* O you who have believed!
Do not be like those who slandered Moses.
God cleared him of all their accusations,
as He was truly honorable in God's sight!

70. O you who have believed!
Fear God and speak the words of Truth,
71. then He will improve your works and forgive your sins.
Whoever obeys God and His Messenger
shall achieve the greatest success.

72* Verily, We have offered Responsibility
to the Heavens, the earth, and the mountains,
but it scared them, and they refused.
Then man took it upon himself,
[though] he was sinful and ignorant.

73. Thus God will punish the Hypocrites, men and women,
and the Associators, men and women,
and will pardon the believing men and women —
indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

V. 4: About the divorce by the Zihar, cf. S.58. The law did not assimilate adopted sons to natural sons.

V. 6: "You should treat your close friends kindly" by helping them and by remembering them in your wills.

V. 8: "The Keepers of Truth" or the righteous: cf. S.57:19.

Vv. 9-10: The same had happened at Badr. The Confederates were more numerous than the Muslims, yet they were defeated in the trenches of Uhud, partly because of blinding sand storms (S.8:9).

V. 13: Yathrib is the old name of Medina. Some of its de fenders refused to fight in the trenches dug around the city.

V. 27: The land that the faithful did not own before: the Jewish settlements in the vicinity of Khaybar (S.48:18), about 100 miles north of Medina.

Vv. 28f: The Prophet wanted his wives to play a leading role in the establishment of Islam, and he gave them the freedom of choice. Some misunderstandings about the Prophet's wives have been revealed in S.66.

V. 33: It seems that the Prophet was hurt by the vanity of some of his wives.

V. 35: Men and women are equal in obligations before God.

V. 36: The impression is created that during the later part of his life the Prophet Muhammad took part in God's Decisions.

V. 37: Apparently, this verse which excuses the Prophet from abiding by the law prohibiting fathers to marry the divorced wives of their sons was addressed during his life only to the members of his family and to his close friends. Zeid, a freed slave adopted by the Prophet, was married to Zeinab, a cousin of the Prophet. This union was not a happy one. At first, the Prophet objected to their divorce, but then he approved it, but opposed its divulgation. Later on, he married Zeinab himself, thus giving rise to sarcastic rumors. Zeid is one of the two contemporaries of the Prophet called by name.

V. 40: The "seal of the Prophets," i.e., the last of them.

V. 49: A divorced wife has the right to keep half of her dowry and to receive a present as well.

V. 50: In the year 7 H, the Prophet had nine wives and several concubines; at the time of his death, he had twelve wives.

V. 51: The Prophet was free to break the rotation between his wives that was considered proper for a husband.

V. 52: Of the Prophet's wives, Raihana, was formerly a slave.

V. 53: To come to a house uninvited during a meal was a violation of good manners, especially as the rules of hospitality demanded that the guest be invited to partake of the meal.

V. 55: "It is not sinful for [wives to appear unveiled] before their fathers..." The meaning might be lost without the interpolation in square brackets.

Vv. 55, 59 may apply to the wives of the Prophet and to women in general. Women are required to hide behind a curtain (or veil?) in the presence of strangers, but the Koran does not give details about how this should be done. The veil covering the face or part of the face did not appear as a regular item of apparel until the Abbasid times, even though the Koran is full of prescriptions and images with veils and curtains. The veil **(hidjab)** is called **purdah** in Persia and **shador** (a whole black garment) in the Middle East. Veiling the entire body cannot be com-

patible with the honorable status given to women in the Koran which stipulates that women are equal to man before God, but the role of women in most societies is dependent on cultural mores. In fringe Islamic societies like the Taliban of Afghanistan or the Alawis of Syria, women are considered to be so inferior to men that they seem to be without souls.

V. 59: Covering their faces and heads, or only their heads, is one of the prevailing customs among Muslim women in many countries.

The Koran requires that women wear long and ample "over-garments" that would disguise their features when they leave their houses.

V. 69: The Prophet was blamed by his opponents for marrying Zeinab, just as Moses had been blamed by his sister and brother for marrying an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1).

V. 72: "Trust" (**amana**) also means responsibility, faith and obedience. God offered the responsibility for the Universe to the highest powers, represented by the Heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they declined it. Man took it upon himself, but did not live up to his pledge because of his shortcomings.

SURA 60 THE WOMAN EXAMINED. ***This short sura was probably revealed after the Meccans broke the treaty of Hudabiya (7-8 H). It questions the wisdom of befriending members of other faiths and sets up some rules for the treatment of believing and disbelieving women.***

60. THE WOMAN EXAMINED
Medinan, 13 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1* O you who have believed!
Do do not befriend My enemies and your enemies
and do not offer them your affection.
Indeed, they rejected the Truth after it came to you,
and expelled the Messenger and yourselves
because of your belief in God, your Lord.
When you came out to fight in My cause
and to seek My approval,
you concealed your friendship with them.
But I know well what you hide and what you reveal.
Whoever does it, has wandered off the straight path.

2. If they overcome you, they will be your enemies.
The hands they stretch to you and their tongues
are full of evil, indeed, they want you to renounce faith.
3. Neither your relatives nor your children shall help you
when God will judge you on Resurrection Day,
for He sees well all what you do.

4. A good example for you was Abraham and his followers
when they said to the people:
"We have nothing to do with you
or with whatever you worship besides God.

We reject you! Unless you believe in One God,
there shall be an everlasting enmity and hatred between us."
But [a bad example] was Abraham when he said to his father:
"Yes, I'll pray for your forgiveness,
but I can't help you with God in any way."

"O our Lord!
We're putting our trust in You,
We're turning to You — in You is our outcome!
5. O our Lord!
Don't make of us a trial
for those who don't believe.
And forgive us, O our Lord!
Verily, You're the Mighty, the Wise."

6. This is truly a good example
for those who yearn for God and the Last Day.
And the one who turns away...
then, verily, God is the Rich, the Praiseworthy.

7* But it may happen that God establishes affection
between you and those you consider as enemies —
indeed, all power is with God,
and God is forgiving and merciful!

8. God does not forbid you to be kind and fair to those
who do not fight you because of religion
and do not expel you from your dwellings.
Verily, God loves the just.
9. But God forbids you to befriend
those who fight against you because of religion,
who expel you from your dwellings,
and help to expel you.
Those who befriend them are doing evil.

10* O you who have believed!
Examine the believing women
who come to you as refugees.
God knows best about their faith.
If you find out that they believe,
do not send them back to the disbelievers —
indeed, they are unlawful for the disbelievers
and [the disbelievers] are unlawful for them.
But return to them all they have spent on [a dowry].
There will be no fault upon you
if you marry them and pay them their dowries.
Do not keep disbelieving women,
but ask for the return
of what you have spent on them,
and let the disbelievers
ask for the return of what they have spent.
Such is God's Judgment,
and He is the Judge between you.

God is all-knowing and wise!

11. If any of your wives crossed over to the disbelievers,
when your turn comes, reimburse those they have left
the equivalent of what they had spent [on the dowry].
And fear God in whom you believe.

12* — O Prophet! If believing women come to you and pledge
that they will not associate anything with God,
that they will neither steal nor commit adultery,
that they will not kill their children,
that they will not accuse others
for the deeds of their hands and feet,
and that they will not oppose you in what is lawful,
then accept their pledge and ask God to forgive them.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

13. O you who have believed!
Do not befriend people who have incurred the wrath of God.
They despair in the Hereafter like the disbelievers despair
in [the resurrection] of the dwellers of the graves.

V. 1: "They rejected the Truth." Truth is not an abstraction: it is the whole world with God's decrees and the laws of nature, it is God Himself. A righteous person acquires Truth gradually and thus gains in wisdom and spiritual growth step by step.

"God is the Truth" means that God is a reality and not a fantasy. God is Light without admixture of darkness. Darkness is the negation of existence. The world does not exist without God's Light. Such are the ideas of the Muslims about the Creator.

As everything else in the Universe, dualism, such as the one between ineffability and nearness to man, is subservient to God. Complementary dualism is expressed in the two categories of God's Names: 1) those that proclaim the qualities of God: Almighty, Most Powerful, Great; and 2) those that determine the relationship between God and man: Compassionate, Relenting, Forgiving.

The Muslims consider it is blasphemous to call God father, as the Christians do. It is a blasphemy to talk in human terms about God's family ties and friendly relationship with any man on earth, the Prophet Jesus included.

Vv. 1f: Muslims are cautioned not to trust their tribesmen who did not join them in Islam — a difficult thing to do, when allegiances are split across families.

V. 7: Friendship between Muslims and their enemies is conceivable only after the latter convert to Islam.

V. 10: "They are not lawful for the disbelievers" — they cannot lawfully marry them.

V. 11: "If any of your wives went to the disbelievers" or "if something belonging to your wives went to the disbelievers."

V. 12: "The deeds of their hands and feet" — their own deeds.

SURA 9 REPENTANCE. ***This is the only sura without the introductory words "In the name of God..." (is it the continuation of S.8?). It contains passages that belong to the latest period of the Prophet's leadership, between the treaty of Hudabiya (6***

H) and the return of the Prophet to Medina after his conquest of Mecca (8 H). The Prophet denounced the treaty with the Confederates (vv. 1-5), took Mecca, fought the remaining opponents and, later, Byzantium (8-9 H), preparing the territorial conquests that began after his death (10 H).

S.9 contains exhortations to unity and vigilance in fighting in God's way. Its focus is on the security of the Ka'ba and the pacification of hostile Christians and Jews. As the zakat and the spoils were insufficient for building a new nation, the faithful were exhorted to pay additional subsidies in the form of "voluntary contributions" or "alms" (sadaqat).

Since they predict the creation of a powerful Islamic State and Nation, SS.9 and 110 form the natural conclusion of the Koran.

9. REPENTANCE
Medinan, 129 verses

1* God and His Messenger are abrogating
the alliance with the Associators
with whom you had entered a treaty.

2. [O Associators!] Roam in the land for four months,
but know that you cannot weaken God
and that God will humiliate the disbelievers.

3. On the day of the great pilgrimage God and His Messenger
are announcing to the people that God and His Messenger
are abrogating the alliance with the Associators.
It is better for you to repent, but if you turn away,
then know that you cannot cheat God.
Announce a painful punishment to the disbelievers!
4. But this does not extend to the Associators
with whom you have an alliance
and who, subsequently, have not failed you in anything
and have not supported anyone against you.
So observe your agreement with them to the end of its term.
Verily, God loves the God-fearing!

5* At the expiration of the prohibited months,
fight the Associators wherever you find them,
capture them, assail them,
and set up against them all kinds of ambush.
But if they repent, establish the prayer,
and pay the zakat, then open them the way.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

6. If any of the Associators asks you for asylum,
shelter him and let him hear the Word of God.
Then escort him to a place safe for him —
indeed, these people lack knowledge.

7* How can there be an alliance of God and His Messenger
with the Associators, except with those
with whom you concluded a treaty by the Sacred Mosque?
Be true to them as long as they are true to you —

verily, God loves the God-fearing!

8. And the others? As soon as they get the upper hand,
they will stop respecting you and will forget
their blood relationships and agreements.
They are making lip service to you,
but their hearts are set against you —
indeed, most of them are reprobate.
9. They trade the Signs of God for a small price,
and they turn away from His path.
Verily. evil is what they do!

10. They respect in a believer neither kinship
nor trust — they have transgressed all bounds.
11. If they repent, establish the prayer, and pay the zakat,
they will become your brothers in religion.
[This is how] We explain the Signs
to the people who understand.

12. But if they break their oaths after the treaty
and start taunting your religion,
then fight the leaders of disbelief
who violate their oaths —
perhaps this will restrain them.

13. Would you not fight the people
who break their pledges
and plot to expel the Messenger?
Indeed, they were the first to attack you.
Why are you afraid of them?
God! He is the One, Whom you must fear if you believe!

14. Fight them, and God will punish them at your hands!
He will humiliate them and sustain you against them.
He will heal the hearts of the believing people
15. and remove hate from their hearts.
God turns to anyone He wills — God is knowing and wise!

16. Or do you think that you will be forgotten
before God finds out who of you was engaged in fighting
and did not take for himself [a protector]
other than God, His Messenger, and the believers?
God is well aware of what you do!

17* After the Associators have confessed their disbelief,
they should not have been left in charge of God's mosques.
Fruitless are their works!
They shall abide in the Fire for ever!
18. God's mosques should be in the care of a person
who believes in God and the Last Day,
establishes the prayer, pays the zakat,
and does not fear anyone, except God.
Such a person is more likely to follow the straight path.

19* Is providing water to pilgrims
or managing the Sacred Mosque
is [as important] as believing in God and the Last Day
and fighting in the cause of God?
No, this is not alike before God,
and God does not guide the people who do wrong.

20. The highest in merit before God
are those who believed, were expelled,
and fought in the cause of God
with their property and soul.
They are the ones who will win!
21. Their Lord sends them
the good news of His mercy and goodwill,
and of the Gardens with enduring contentment
22. in which they shall abide for ever.
Verily, God wields a great reward!

23. O you who have believed!
Do not seek the protection of your fathers and brothers
if they prefer disbelief to belief.
Those who seek their protection are sinners.
24. Say:
"If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses,
and your family, the property you have acquired,
your trade which worries you when it stagnates,
and the dwellings you enjoy, are more important for you
than God, His Messenger, and the fight in His cause,
then wait until God announces His Decision.
God doesn't guide the people who are corrupt!"

25* God has assisted you in many encounters
as on the day of Hunain
when your great number amazed you.
But it had not helped you at all, for wide as it was,
the land became too narrow for you, and you retreated.

26* Then God descended His Sakina
upon His Messenger and the believers.
He sent down forces invisible to you
and punished the disbelievers.
Such was the reward of those who disbelieved!
27. But after that God will pardon anyone He wills,
indeed, God is forgiving and merciful!

28* O you who have believed!
The Associators are really unclean,
so do not let them manage the Sacred Mosque
after their year is over.
If you fear poverty,
God will soon enrich you from His bounty if He wills,
Verily, God is all-knowing and wise!
29* Fight those who do not believe in God and the Last Day,

who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden,
and who do not follow the religion of Truth,
even if they belong to the People of the Scripture,
until they pay the tribute with their own hands
in sign of obedience and submission.

30* The Jews say:
"Ezra is the son of God,"
and the Christians say:
"The Messiah is the son of God,"
but these are just words on their lips —
they only repeat what the disbelievers had said in the past.
Let God wipe them out! How deluded they are!

31. Besides God, they took for themselves as lords
their scholars and monks, and the Messiah, son of Mary,
albeit they were commanded to worship only One God.
There is no god but Him!
[Exalted] He is in His glory above anything they associate.
32. They want to snuffle out God's Light with their mouths,
but God wants only one thing: to perfect His Light,
even if it is hateful to the disbelievers!

33* He is the One, Who has sent His Messenger
with the Guidance and the true Religion
to set it above all religions,
even if this is hateful to the Associators!

34. O you who have believed!
Many scholars and monks consume
the wealth of the people unjustly
and turn them away from God's path.
Some of them are hoarding gold and silver,
rather than spending them in the cause of God.
Announce to them a painful punishment!
35. On that Day all this hoard will be heated in Hellfire
and used to brand them on their foreheads, sides, and backs:
— This is what you have hoarded for yourselves!
Then taste what you have hoarded!

36* Verily, in God's Book, there are twelve months [in a year]
since the day when He created the Heavens and earth.
Four of them are unlawful [for fighting],
as prescribed by religion, so during [these months]
do not put yourselves in harm's way.
Fight the Associators in one body,
as they fight you in one body,
and know that God is with the God-fearing!
37. Transposing [the prohibited months]
only promotes disbelief among the disbelievers.
One year they consider them lawful and another, prohibited.
They adjust them to the number prohibited by God
and make prohibited months lawful [for war].

The evil of their actions is made attractive to them,
but God does not guide people without faith!

38. O you who have believed!
Why do you cling so firmly to the ground when told:
"Set forth in the cause of God."?
Do you really prefer this life to the Hereafter?
But the enticements of this life are so small
in comparison with the Hereafter!
39. If you do not set forth [to battle], you will be submitted
to a painful punishment and replaced by other people.
You cannot harm God in the least —
indeed, He has power over all things.

40* God will help [the Messenger] if you do not help him.
When the disbelievers expelled him,
he [hid] with his companion in a cave.
There He said to his companion:
"Don't grieve, God is with us!"
Then God sent down to him His Sakina,
supported him with invisible hosts,
and abased the word of the disbelievers.
And the Word of God was exalted to the highest —
indeed, God is mighty and wise!

41. Set forth with heavy or light equipment
and strive in the cause of God
with your property and soul.
If you [only] knew how much better it is for you!
42* If the benefits were at hand and the journey easy,
they would have certainly followed you.
But the journey seemed too long, and they swore by God:
"We'd have gone with you if we could!"
Thus they have destroyed their souls —
indeed, God knows what liars they are.

43* — May God forgive you! Why have you exempted them
[from fighting] before finding out who spoke the truth
and before exposing the liars?
44. Those who believe in God and the Last Day
do not seek your exemption,
but fight with their possessions and souls.
God knows the God-fearing!
45. Only those who do not believe in God and the Last Day
are asking you for exemption.
Their hearts are full of doubts
and they waver in their indecision.
46. If they wanted to set forth,
they would have certainly been ready for that.
But God opposed their departure and delayed them.
They were told:
"Remain with those who stay [behind]!"

47. Even if they go forth with you,
they would not bolster your strength,
but only bring confusion in your ranks and sow dissent.
Some of you might listen to them,
but God is well aware of those who do wrong.
48. Indeed, they had been sowing confusion
and upsetting the matters for you
long before the Truth has manifested itself
and God's Design has been enforced much to their aversion.
49. Some of them say:
"Grant me an exemption [from fighting]
and don't lead me into temptation!"
But they have already yielded to temptation
and Hell has already encircled the disbelievers.
50. They are upset when something good happens to you,
but when misfortune comes your way, they say:
"We've already taken care of our affairs!"
And they turn away with glee.
51* Say:
"Nothing can happen to us
other than what God has destined us for.
He's our Protector, and the believers rely upon God."
52* Say:
"You cannot expect for us anything other
than one of the two glorious [outcomes].
But for you, we're expecting the punishment
which God will deliver either by Himself or at our hands.
So keep waiting, and we'll also wait!"
53. Say:
"Whether you give a contribution willingly or unwilling,
it shall not be accepted
because you're truly a people of reprobates!"
54. Yes, their contributions shall not be accepted
because they deny God and His Messenger,
are lazy in praying, and give only under compulsion.
55. Do not admire their wealth or their children,
indeed, their punishment from God in this life
is in letting their souls perish in disbelief.

56. They swear by God that they are on your side,
but they are not with you —
these people are scared of everything.
57. They would like to find a shelter or a cave,
or some exit to rush into it in all haste!

58* Among them there are those who slander you
because of the [new] contributions.
If they get a share of them, they rejoice,
and if not, they are indignant.
59. They should be pleased with what God and His Messenger
gave them and say:
"God is sufficient for us! Indeed, God and His Messenger
shall soon give us some of His bounty.

Our hopes are only with God!"

60. Contributions are for the poor and the destitute,
for those who collect them,
for those whose hearts strive to the Truth,
for the slaves and the debtors,
for the cause of God, and for the wayfarer.
Such is God's Decree! God is all-knowing and wise!

61* Some of them slander the Prophet, saying:
"He's [all] ears."
Say:
"He's [all] ears for your benefit.
He believes in God, he believes in the believers,
he's a blessing for the believers amongst you."
And for those who slander God's Messenger,
there shall be a painful punishment.

62. Some of them swear to you by God only to please you.
But if they believed,
they would better seek to satisfy God and His Messenger.
63. Do they not know that for each one who opposes
God and His Messenger, there is the Fire of Hell
as an everlasting abode?
That will be a great humiliation!

64. The Hypocrites are afraid that a sura
revealing what is in their hearts
might be sent down against them.
Say:
"Enjoy mocking as much as you wish, but, verily,
God shall bring to light what you're so scared of!"
65. Ask them, and they will surely say:
"We were only joking and having fun!"
Say:
"Were you not mocking God, His Signs, and His Messenger?"
66. Make no excuses! You have denied after you had believed.
If We pardon some of you,
We will punish the rest for their sins.

67. The Hypocrites, men and women, are all alike:
they urge to evil, forbid what is lawful,
and hold their hands back to withhold contributions.
They have forgotten God, and God has forgotten them.
Verily, the Hypocrites are corrupt!
68. To the Hypocrites, men and women, and to the disbelievers,
God has promised the Fire of Hell as an everlasting abode —
that will be enough for them!
God has cursed them! A lasting punishment for them!

69. The same happened to your predecessors,
albeit they were stronger than you in power,
had more wealth and children, and enjoyed their share,

as you are now enjoying your share.
You lapse [into vain talk], as they used to lapse.
Their works will be useless in this life and the Hereafter —
they shall be the losers!

70* Have they not heard about their predecessors:
the people of Noah, 'Ad and Thamood, the people of Abraham,
the owners of Madyan, and the overthrown [cities]?
Indeed, their Messengers came to them with clear Proofs.
It is not God, Who has wronged them —
they have wronged themselves.

71. Believing men and women support one another,
urge to the lawful, and forbid evil;
they observe the prayer, pay the zakat,
and obey God and His Messenger.
God will be merciful to them.
Verily, God is mighty and wise!
72* To believing men and women God has promised
Gardens under which the rivers flow
to abide in them for ever
and beautiful dwellings in the Gardens of Eden.
But God's approval is best — this is a great success!

73. — O Prophet!
Fight the disbelievers and the Hypocrites
and be tough with them.
Hell shall be their refuge — what a dreadful outcome!
74* They swear by God that they did not say anything.
Yet they spoke words of disbelief,
and they did it after joining Islam.
But all their plots have failed!
They responded with hatred to the bounty
that God and His Messenger had bestowed upon them.
It was better for them to repent!
And if they relapse, God will punish them harshly
in this life and in the Hereafter;
they shall have neither a friend nor a helper on earth.

75. Some of them had a Covenant with God; [they said]:
"If He gives us of His bounty,
we promise to contribute, we promise to be upright."
76. But after [God] had given them of His bounty,
they became greedy, turned away, and broke [their promise].
77. Then, for breaking the Covenant with God
and entangling themselves in lies,
[God] filled their hearts with hypocrisy
till the Day of their meeting with Him.
78. Do they not know that God is aware of their secrets
and their covert meetings, and that God knows the Unseen?

79. Those who slander the believers and ridicule them
because they willingly give contributions or help

by their labor when they have nothing [else] to give,
God will ridicule them in return,
and they shall receive a painful retribution.

80. Whether you pray for their pardon or not,
even if you prayed for their pardon seventy times,
it will not matter: God would not forgive them!
Indeed, they rejected God and His Messenger
and God does not guide the people who are corrupt!

81. Those who were left [at home] rejoiced
while staying behind the back of the Messenger of God.
They refused to contribute their property and souls
to the fight in the cause of God, saying:
"Don't set out in this heat!"
Say:
"The Fire of Hell will be much hotter!"
If they could [only] think!

82. So let them laugh a little more, then they will cry a lot
in recompense for what they have amassed.
83. If God makes you meet some of them again,
and they ask your permission to set out, say:
"You'll never set out with me again
and we'll never fight the enemy together!
Indeed, you sat idle the first time,
so continue to sit idle with those who stayed behind!"

84. Do not pray for any one of them who has died
and do not stand by his grave.
Indeed, they have denied God and His Messenger
and have died as reprobates.
85. Do not admire their wealth and their children —
God intends to use that to punish them in this world.
Their souls shall perish in disbelief.

86. When a sura is revealed, [urging] to believe in God
and to fight on the side of His Messenger,
the affluent among them ask you to be excused, saying:
"Leave us with those who sit [behind the lines]!"

87. Yes, they prefer to stay with women behind the lines —
Their hearts are sealed, they do not understand.
88. But the Messenger and those who believe with him
fight without sparing property or soul.
For them — all the good things! For them is prosperity!
89. God has prepared for them the Gardens
under which the rivers flow to abide therein for ever.
That will be a great victory!

90. Some Arab nomads came with excuses to be exempted,
but only those who rejected God and His Messenger
asked for exemption. A painful punishment shall soon befall

those of them who did not believe.
91. There is no blame on the frail, the sick,
and those who have nothing to contribute
if they are honest before God and His Messenger —
there is no blame on those who do good!
God is forgiving and merciful!
92* And when you said to those who came to you for supplies:
"I don't have any supplies for you!" —
they went back, their eyes filled with tears of grief
because they had no means to pay the expenses.

93. The rich who ask to be excused are to be blamed,
for they prefer to stay with women behind the lines.
God has sealed their hearts, so that they do not know.
94* If you turn to them,
they will start apologizing to you.
Say:
"Stop apologizing! We won't believe you:
God has already told us the truth about you.
God and His Messenger are observing your actions,
and in the end you'll be brought back to the One,
Who knows the concealed and the revealed;
then He will reveal to you what you've done."
95. If you turn to them again,
they will ask you in God's name to be left alone.
So leave them alone — indeed, they are an abomination!
Hellfire shall be their refuge
in recompense for what they have done.
96. They shall swear pledges to you,
hoping that you will be satisfied with them.
But even if you are satisfied with them,
God will never approve of a people of reprobates.

97. The Arab nomads are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy,
and the less capable of understanding
what God has sent down to His Messenger.
God is all-knowing and all-wise!
98. Some of the nomads mistake contributions for fines
and only wait for a calamity to strike you.
Let a calamity strike them!
God is hearing and all-knowing!
99. But other nomads believe in God and the Last Day,
and hope that their contributions
will bring them closer to God
and that they will deserve the prayers of the Messenger.
Yes, they will come closer [to God],
and God will soon admit them to His mercy.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

100. The vanguard are the Muhadjirin, the Ansars,
and those who follow them in good deeds.
God is pleased with them, and they are pleased with [God].
He has prepared for them Gardens under which the rivers flow

where they shall abide for ever.
What a great victory it will be!

101*Some of the nomads among you
or among the inhabitants of Medina
are hypocrites, obstinate in their hypocrisy.
You do not know them, but We know who they are,
and We will punish them twice
before they face the great retribution.
102.Others who had been mixing good deeds with bad ones
have confessed their sins — perhaps God will pardon them.
Verily, God is forgiving and merciful!

103.Take contributions off their property
to cleanse and sanctify them; and pray for them!
Verily, your prayers will comfort them.
God is hearing and all-knowing!
104.Do they not know that God accepts the repentance
of His servants and accepts their contributions?
God is truly the Relentant, the Merciful.

105.Say:
"Toil, and soon God, His Messenger, and the believers
will see your works and you'll be returned to the One,
Who knows the Unseen and the revealed.
Then He will announce to you what you've done."
106.There are others who are waiting for God's decision.
He might either punish them or forgive —
God is all-knowing and wise!

107*And there are those who out of malice and disbelief
have set up a mosque to split the believers
and to open the way to those
who fought God and His Messenger in the past.
They naturally swear that they have good intentions,
but God witnesses that they are liars.
108.Do not ever pray over there!
It is more honorable to pray in a mosque
founded from the first day upon the fear of God.
People love to purify themselves therein,
and God loves those who keep themselves pure.

109.Who is better: the one who founds his building
on devotion to God and [His] approval
or the one who founds his building
on the edge of an eroding dune
ready to tumble down with him into Hellfire?
God does not guide the people who do wrong!
110. Their building will be tearing their hearts with despair,
until their hearts are shattered.
God is all-knowing and wise!

111. Verily, God has bought the souls of the believers
and their possessions for the price of Paradise
that was truly promised them
in the Torah, the Evangel, and the Koran.
They fight in the cause of God, they kill, and are killed.
But Who fulfills His promise better than God?
So rejoice in the deal you have made —
it is such a great victory!
112. It is for those who repent and worship,
who glorify, and fast;
who bow and prostrate themselves;
who urge to the lawful, restrain from evil
and observe the limits set up by God.
So announce the good news to the believers!

113. It is not proper for the Prophet and the believers
to pray for the pardon of the Associators,
even if they are related to them,
when they will obviously dwell in the blazing Fire.

114. Abraham has prayed for his father's pardon
only because he promised it to him.
But when he understood that he was God's enemy,
he dissociated himself from him.
Verily, Abraham was soft-hearted and forbearing!

115. God would not lead people astray after He guided them
and explained to them what they ought to avoid.
Verily, God is well aware of everything.
116. Verily, God is the Sovereign of Heavens and earth.
He gives life and causes death;
besides God you have no protector and no helper.
117. God is kind to the Prophet, the Muhadjirun, and the Ansar!
They followed Him in the difficult hour
when some hearts have almost been seduced away.
He is kind and merciful to them. He pardoned them
118*and those three who were left behind when the earth,
wide as it is, became so narrow for them,
that their souls felt constrained, and they realized
that there is no refuge from God other than in Himself.
Then [God] turned to them to let them repent.
Verily, God is the Relentful, the Merciful.

119. O you who have believed!
Fear God and stay with the Keepers of Truth.
120*It is not proper for the dwellers of Medina
and for the nomads in its vicinity
to abandon the Messenger of God
nor to think of themselves more than of him.
Indeed, all their suffering in the cause of God
is credited to them as good work:
be it thirst, exhaustion, hunger,
the incursions that enrage the disbelievers,

or the injuries caused by the enemy.
Verily, God will not waste the reward of those who do good.
121* Any contribution they make, small or large,
their crossing a valley, — [all] will be accounted for,
so that God might reward them for the best of their deeds.

122. It is not fitting for the believers to attack in one body.
It is better to leave behind a group from each company
to let them study religion
and admonish their people upon their return —
then, perhaps, they will be on the alert!

123. O you who have believed!
Fight the disbelievers who surround you,
let them see how tough you are!
Know that God is on the side of the God-fearing.
124. Each time a sura is revealed, some of them say:
"Whose faith will be increased by it?"
— It will increase the faith of the believers,
and they will rejoice at it;

125. but it will also increase in abomination
the diseased in hearts who shall die in disbelief.

126. Do they not see that [their faith]
is put to test once or twice a year?
But they do not want to repent or to remember.
127. And when a sura is descended, they glance at each other:
"Is anyone watching you?"
And again they turn away.
It is God, Who has averted their hearts —
indeed, these people lack sense!

128* Now, a Messenger came to you from your midst.
He is grieved by what befell you, and he worries about you.
He is kind and merciful to the believers!

129. — [O Muhammad!] If they turn away, say:
"God is sufficient for me. There's no god but Him!
In Him I put my trust — He's the Lord of the great Throne."

V. 1: Some translators prefer "immunity" or "abrogation" to "repentance," but the latter fits the text much better. The abrogated treaty is the one concluded at Hudabya (S.5:19). Vv. 1-29 were revealed in Meccas in 631.

V. 2: "For four months" — the months during which it was forbidden to wage war (cf. v.37).

V. 3: The day of the great pilgrimage is probably its ninth day when the pilgrims assemble in the plain of Arafat, some twelve miles southwest of Mecca. The meeting, in which hundreds of thousands participate, prefigures the assembly on Judgment Day.

V. 5: Leniency and tolerance to man, frequently described in the Koran as one of the highest virtues, are suspended for the duration of the last battles for the hegemony of Islam (S.5:69).

V. 7: Two pagan tribes, **Bani Hamza** and **Bani Kinana**, remained faithful to their alliance with the Muslims.

Vv. 17-18: After the conquest of Mecca by the Prophet (8 H), the management of the Ka'ba returned to Muslim caretakers.

V. 19: Being the custodian of a mosque is not as great a deed as fighting in the way of God.

V. 25: **Hunain**, about 15 miles west of Mecca, is where the Muslims won a difficult battle against the idolaters (8 H).

V. 26: "Sakina" — "Assurance," cf. SS.48:4, 2:248.

V. 28: The reduction in the number of visitors to Mecca during the war caused a loss of revenue for the city.

V. 29: The **jizia** or poll-tax has been imposed by the Muslims on the non-believers remaining in Mecca after its conquest.

V. 30: Ezra was the object of veneration on the part of the Jews for restoring their national identity after a period of decline (Ezra 7:6f).

V. 33: "[God] is the One who has sent His Messenger with the Guidance and the true Religion." These words occur in the Koran twice elsewhere (cf. S.48:28 and S.61:9).

V. 36: The sacred months were apparently changed according to the demands of the war. The twelve months of the Muslim calendar are Muharram, Safar, Rabi' al-Awal, Rabi' al-Thani, Jumad al-Ula, Jumad ath-Thania, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Zul-Qa'da, and Zul-Hijja.

V. 40: The Prophet's companion was probably Abu Bakr.

V. 42: The reference is to an expedition to Tabuk, halfway between Medina and Damascus in 631 (9 H). The center of Islam during the first four Khalifs was Medina, then Damascus (661-750). Damascus was followed by Baghdad and Cordova (VIIIth to the Xth century) and the Fatimid and Abbasid Cairo. In 1517 Cairo was occupied by the Turks and Istambul, the former Constantinople, became the capital of Islam till the XXth century. Nowadays, Islam has several religious centers, Sunni Cairo and Shi'ite Qoom in Iran and Najaf in Iraq, among others.

V. 43: Before the expedition to Tabuk, the Prophet was too confident in his people to check out his men one by one.

V. 51: "Has predestined us to," lit.: "has written" (**kataba**), hence the word **maktoob** for resignation to God's will.

V. 52: Two glorious outcomes: victory and martyrdom.

V. 58: The additional contributions (**sadaqat**) that are mentioned repeatedly in this sura were instituted to complement the zakat. Apparently, there were complaints about their distribution.

V. 61: There is an assonance between the Arabic words **uzunun** (ears) and **u'zunu** (he hears). The words might be a disbelievers' pun about alleged eavesdropping (intelligence gathering) by the Prophet.

V. 70: The overthrown cities are Sodom and Gomorrah.

V. 72: "Approval" (**ridwan**) is also mercy, peace and goodwill.

V. 74: "They have failed in the plot" to murder the Prophet.

V. 92: "Supplies": transportation or mounts.

V. 94: Note the closeness between the Prophet and God.

V. 101: The double punishment before castigation in Hell consists of humiliation and death on earth.

V. 107: Someone "who fought God and His Messenger in the past" was **Abu 'Amir**, also known as Rahib (the Monk).

V. 118: The three people left behind were three Ansars.

V. 120: References to the expedition to Tabuk (vv. 42, 81).

V. 121: "Crossing any valley," or "executing a heroic deed."

V. 128: "To the believers, he is kind and merciful" — in the early suras these words were used only in reference to God.

SURA 110 HELP. ***A short uplifting sura suggesting that the appeal to the Jews and Christians has started to bring results. It is said that in this sura the Prophet saw the closure to his ministry.***

110. H E L P
Medinan, 3 verses

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

1. When God's help and victory come to pass,
2. and you see people entering God's religion in crowds,
3* celebrate the praise of your Lord
and ask for His forgiveness —
verily, He is ever forgiving!

Addendum

After the death of the Prophet, Islam was headed by four deputies (Khalifs) related to the Prophet by blood or marriage: **Abu Bakr**, '**Omar**, '**Othman**, and '**Ali ibn Abi Taleb**, the husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatima. The main Islamic movement was called **Sunni** (**sunna** means law). Its leader, the Khalif, was a caretaker of the community, but not someone anointed by God.

Islamic "dissidents," mostly conservative and fundamentalists (the Islamic puritans), began to appear soon after the death of the Prophet. The first ones were the **Kharadjites** (**kharadja** means to get out) who refused to recognize the leadership of the Prophet's relatives, according to C.49:13. The most important schism occurred when the Shi'ites (**shi'a 'Ali**, the party of 'Ali) announced that 'Ali's sons — the "Imams" Hassan and Hussein were the only legitimate heirs of the Prophet in his blood line. This schism led to war and to the demise of the young Imams. The Shi'ites founded the "Imamate" under which the community is ruled by Imams, carriers of Truth, Knowledge and Light. Fighting between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites intensified during the rule of the Khalif 'Ummaya and his kin in Damascus. With time, the Shi'ites came up with their own myths and traditions. The first eleven Imams kept appearing and disappearing for the purpose of conspiracy. The secretiveness and mystery surrounding the Shi'ites led them to accept hypocrisy and a kind of "jesuitism." The twelth Imam disappeared to become the savior (**Mahdi**) who will establish God's law and peace in the world.

The Muslims of both confessions, the Sunni and the Shi'ites, alternated in number and strength. Their struggle continues to this day, especially in Iraq and Iran. Prominent among the other sects are the mystics (**Sufi**) who support the cult of the "saints" (**aktab**) that is foreign to the Koran and the early traditions.

The Khalifat and the Imamate led to a sultanate in Turkey, a monarchy in Iran, various emirates in Arabia, and republics as in Algeria and Egypt. The fight between the two main confessions continues until now, but all Muslims are united in their disapproval of the dissolution of ethical foundations, the immorality among young people, the ease of divorce, and the vanishing of spiritual values in the West.

Understanding the Koran

Six Stages for the Understanding of the Koran

For the literary critic, the Koran (**Al-qur'an**, from **qara'a** = to recite) is a collection of poetic and religious fragments composed at the beginning of the VIIth century and assembled into 114 chapters or suras of unequal length. For the believer, the Koran is the Word of God recorded in Arabic by Angels and kept in Heaven on scrolls or tablets (SS.85, 80, 56). For the mystic, the language of the Koran imparts its being and form to the Universe. One may ask: can the Koran be understood at all if man should not even try to grasp the deep meaning of God's Words that are beyond scientific inquiry? If one takes that position, the Koran cannot be understood in its entirety, but only perceived at one of several levels of spiritual readiness on the part of the reader.

One can start by considering the Koran as a historic document that can be subjected to scientific and linguistic study. One of the tasks of the literary critic is to submit the basic tenets

of the Koran to logical analysis and to unravel its obscure themes. However, because criticism breaks down texts rather than assembles them, this approach will empty the Koran of its spiritual content and confuse the unprepared reader or strike him as counterproductive.

One of the challenges in the study of the Koran is the impossibility of dating the suras with precision. Linguistic analysis and the elucidation of historic events can create apparently logical schemes, but many of the Koranic chapters are combinations of pronouncements made at different times and in different places. The dating of fragments within each sura has been tackled by Bell (RB). By talking of the "plan" or "composition" of suras, he might be suggesting that the VIIth century editors have exerted some literary selectivity in assembling the Holy Book. It is evident, however, that when the family and companions of Prophet, who staffed the editing commission, were gathering the evidence and establishing the reliability of witnesses, they did not aim at producing a literary masterpiece.

The Gospels were recorded in their canonical form decades after the death of Jesus Christ by people who never knew him personally. They knew beforehand what they were aiming at, and they edited well-structured texts with obvious literary appeal. In contrast, the authenticity of the Koran is felt precisely in the spontaneity of composition and the lack of elaborate editing. Often lacking a central theme, most of the suras have no descriptive or rational title and are named after one of their words. Apparently, it was assumed that the faithful could forego the logical development of ideas and exact descriptions of events: all they needed was a spiritual, timeless message. Therefore, the scientific approach to the Book is only the first tentative stage of its understanding.

The second level of understanding, the one afforded by this translation, requires a judicious rearrangement of the suras in order to introduce a clear picture of the key principles and ideas of Islam. If the reader encounters the Koran in the sequence here proposed, he will become acquainted step by step with the basic beliefs and duties of the faithful, the Muslim representation of the Afterlife, the stories of pre-Islamic Prophets, the attitude of Islam toward other religions, the legal and aesthetic prescriptions, and the rise of the Islamic nation. This level of understanding is best served by the use of plain American English. By respecting the integrity of each sura and each verse, the proposed translation preserves both the literary and spiritual content of the Koran.

The third level of understanding requires a free emotional abandon on the part of the reader. The Koranic message is expressed in similes, metaphors, and allusions that go beyond the comprehension of the best linguists and must be "felt" by the reader. The supernatural is conveyed in symbols that allude to religious, social, political, cultural, economic, and calamitous events. To appreciate the Koran at this level, one must surrender to its beauty, simplicity, and impetuousness. Poetic renditions (AJA, FN, TSh) may seem to make pleasant reading until one realizes that they are fabrications. Indeed, the Koran is not poetry, and the Prophet himself insisted that he was not a poet. Therefore, the Koran must be translated only in prose, a measured, straight prose that preserves its spiritual impetuousness and conveys some of the flavor of the Koranic language that is rooted in the depths of Arab spirituality and mode of life.

One can reach a fourth level of understanding of the Koran by listening to tapes recorded by renowned Arabic cantors, now widely available in US stores opened by immigrants from the Middle East. Indeed, the Koran is meant to be chanted and is enhanced by modulations, loud exclamations, and sudden pauses. With spiritual predisposition one can find in the recitation of

the Holy Book joy and peace of mind, perceive one of the prevailing human sounds of the Universe, and communicate with millions of people in the world for whom the Koran is precious and divine, even though most of them do not understand all its words.

If the fourth level of understanding involves hearing, the fifth level involves sight. The Koran proclaims itself to be a written document preserved in Heaven on a tablet. Therefore, by immersing oneself visually in the calligraphy of the Koran, a lettered Muslim sees it as a divine script of sublime perfection that enhances his wonder of the sublime. In their search for visual excellence, the best of the Muslim artists have devised magnificent inspired scripts. The respected art of sacred calligraphy became central to Islamic art. Its function is to make language accessible to the eye in its fullest expression. With his hand the artist conjures to the tip of the pen the poetry, rhetoric, geometry, music, and graphic arts, all to convey his religious fervor and ecstasy. The written words of the Koran must be beautiful, inspiring and, above all, bursting with life. Hence, the flowing rhythm, the bold strokes of the pen, the studied asymmetry, the elongation and modulation of the letters, all in brilliant color, gold, green, red, and blue. Hence, the tempestuous movement from right to left, the trenchant lines thrust forward like swords. The straight and curved lines, a reflection of the all-pervading dualism, are launched free to interplay in a rigorously prescribed fashion. Similar inscriptions set in mosaics or carved in stone adorn the walls of the most beautiful mosques.

The vignettes — the elaborate frames of luxury editions — are also lovingly designed to enhance the aspect, the color and the very fragrance of the letters. What an enriching experience it is to let oneself fall under the spell of the most splendid editions of the Korans!

The sixth and highest level of the perception of the Koran is its religious and mystical acceptance by the "inner heart" of the reader. The full spiritual absorption of the Holy Book might require the study of classical Arabic and Islamic tradition. With an English text, faithful to the spirit and the letter as humanly possible, it is difficult to imagine God's hand behind each of its words. But who will start studying the Arabic text without knowing if he will be able to persevere to the end? Obviously, one should start by reading a responsible version in one's own language.

For the believers in Divine Guidance, Truth is established on the revealed Word of God, a Word which has a deep meaning for a religious person, even if he or she cannot grasp its full meaning by logic or experience. But here, on Earth, the Scriptures have been written by men prone to making mistakes. Wisely, Islam has recognized that differences in interpretation are inevitable and has approved parallel schools of thought within its fold. Who knows, Islam might accept one more school of thought, that of Westerners who would live by a foreign version of the Koran without destroying the unity of the Islamic world and even enriching it!

An enlightened Islam, with its love for beauty and science, might recognize all the civilizations in the Universe as manifestations of God's mercy.

Translating the Koran

In this version of the Koran the order of its Chapters has been rearranged and relevant notes have been provided.

It is believed in the Muslim world that Koran has been created to reveal God's global design. No wonder then that according to many Muslims the Holy Book should never be trans-

lated. They say: "How dare a measly creature translate the Word of God? Haven't the multilingual Muslim nations already adopted the Arabic text as their own? Don't the Iranian, Indonesian and Nigerian Muslims trust their scholars to read and explain to them the Holy Book? Wouldn't the emergence of versions in different languages raise doubts about its authenticity, as has been the case with the Bible?

These objections to translations are not justifiable because the Koran does not condemn them. It purports to be addressed to all the nations by "the Lord of the Worlds," and it states that the Word of God was "made easy in your tongue" (S.44:58) and "easy to remember" (S.54:22). Accordingly, Muslim Centers in Western countries are stocking various English and bilingual editions.

Some translations of the Koran are literal transcriptions and others are paraphrased rewriting (see **Bibliography**). Both cryptic transliterations and paraphrased texts may be confusing for the general reader. The scholarly literalist translates word for word with such a keen attention to definitions and grammar as to deaden the text, while the religious zealot translates from his heart and produces a personal commentary in a foreign language.

The current work seeks to fill the need for a translation which offers a reasonable compromise between accuracy and clarity and presents the Koran in an arrangement of suras and a style that makes its reading an enlightening experience even for the non-Muslim.

While reading this Scripture, the reader must keep in mind that the language of the Koran is special and inimitable. The Prophet Muhammad preached to Arabic speakers in possession of a rich pre-Islamic literary tradition who were able to appreciate the beauty of cadence and rhyme put to the service of a fiery rhetoric. The Arabic scripts, Naskhi and Nabati, and the cursive script circulating through commercial channels in the Middle East, all predated Islam. It is just impossible for a twenty-first century English speaker to fully grasp every single word, allusion, expression, comparison and syntactic turn of the Holy Book. Thousands of commentators have worked on explaining the most elliptic and arcane passages of the Koran, but exegesis should not be a major concern for a modern translator. If a significant word has different connotations or if a verse has several interpretations, he may indicate the variants in appended notes without making further comments.

American English and British English, Shakespearian English and the King James Version's English are products of their times and culture. They differ in their semantics and in their projection of esthetic and moral values. Modern American English, with its directness, expressiveness and conciseness, is a more adequate vehicle for conveying the meaning of the Koran than archaic forms of English or composite forms posing as sacramental.

A Scripture that says of itself: "These are the words of a noble Messenger and not the words of a poet" (S.69:40), should not be forced into the straitjacket of poetry, even if its inspired and vigorous language is rich in similes, metaphors, and rhyming forms.

The Koran is meant to be recited and not to be silently read. Its rhymes, alliterations, exclamations, and religious fervor make it suitable for chanting, and its musical content is perceived from one end of the Muslim world to the other, carrying a deep religious and experience and a feeling of universal brotherhood across the continents. The English translation cannot approach but only suggest the esthetic qualities of the original.

The Koran is also difficult to translate because of the occasional succession or overlap of unrelated passages without visible transitions, the surprising contour of some verses cut to

comply with rhythm and rhyme, and the elliptic style, compact to the extreme and yet prone to endless repetitions and new starts. The absence of punctuation in the original presents a real challenge because punctuation marks have two functions that are not always compatible: helping the reader and enforcing the rules of grammar.

The translation must preserve the spirit and purpose of the original text and mirror the faith and devotion of the original as closely as possible. One should never forget that the epithets that the Koran attaches to itself the most insistently are clarity and lucidity.

Rules followed by the translator in his work

1) The sequence of the Koranic chapters is rearranged to allow the reader to proceed step by step from the simplest ideas to the most elaborate ones. The key to understanding the Koran lies in this rearrangement.

2) The number and the integrity of verses is faithfully preserved, even at the price of some awkwardness in English. Words are occasionally re-arranged, but only within the same verse.

3) For clarity's sake, a line is skipped between passages that differ in tone or content. Far from hurting continuity, breaking the text into paragraphs helps to emphasize missed connections and eliminate apparent obscurities.

4) Paraphrasing or substituting Arab metaphors with modern English cliches is avoided. Where the meaning stays clear, Arabic figures of speech are translated rather than replaced by English equivalents in order to keep at least some of the Arab imagery.

5) Verbal forms are central and essential in Arabic. They give to the Koran its vigorous motion and action; thus they are preserved as much as possible. However, lack of correspondence between roughly equivalent Arab and English aspects and tenses is a serious difficulty, aggravated by the fact that, as the Koran unravels, the future might be described as occurring in the present or even as having occurred in the past: indeed, in the "Unseen" events take place outside of historical time and physical space. Naturally, the English verb forms should be simple and grammatically correct in translation.

6) A recurrent feature of Arabic is the reinforcing of a verb by its own participial form as in "he's running running," in which the second "running" emphasizes the action of running. In English, one has to make do with adverbs with a different root (he's running fast) with an inevitable weakening of motion and meaning.

7) Verbal contractions are essential for conveying the dynamics of conversation: in the Koran, verbal exchanges are short and to the point. Saying "Do you not know that..." would weaken the text. "Don't you know that..." is definitely called for.

8) The frequent use of the phrases "they said" and "he said," without identification of the speaker(s), may render some passages ambiguous; however, ambiguity is eliminated in the English text by parenthetical introduction of the speakers' names.

9) Occasionally, the antecedents of pronouns are hard to find. The English text must use the pronouns in an unequivocal manner and bring doubtful interpretations to attention. If God refers to Himself as "We," "your Lord," "He," and "I" — this distinction is respected everywhere.

10) The declamatory emotional style of the Arabic Koran is sustained by a rich repertory of expletives and interjections, which can be ignored in most cases. The hortatory quality of the original can be restored by the introduction of exclamation and interrogation marks and other

devices of punctuation. Only the expletive **inna** is consistently translated as "verily"; **innama,** which can be understood in different ways, is ignored.

11) English words necessary for preserving the meaning are added in square brackets [ ], except when they are mandated by the English syntax. Such words as ***all***, ***always***, ***and***, ***but***, ***indeed*** are introduced without square brackets if they are consistent with the meaning.

12) Intelligibility is served best by spelling names according to common English usage (Moses, Jesus and Koran for **Musa, 'Issa** and **Qur'an**, respectively). **Muhammad** is more correct phonetically than Mohammed. The pronunciation of Arabic words is, of course, only approximate. The Arabic guttural stop, as in **'Omar**, is represented by the apostrophe **'**, and so is the short stop in the middle of some words such as **Qur'an**. The diphthongs heard in "wand" is conveyed by the English ***w***. ***Q*** represents the Arabic guttural sound of ***k***, and ***k*** — its soft sound, as in **kataba**. ***Kh*** stands for the guttural ***h***, and ***h*** is pronounced as in the English "hit." Arabic and English have different systems of stress: that further complicates transliteration.

13) Words are spelled with small letters if they refer to the physical world (the stars in heaven) and with capital letters if they refer to the Unseen (Angels in Heaven).

14) In the view of Islam, every word of the Koran emanates from God Himself and the whole Holy Book is a lengthy quotation. In this translation, quotation marks are used for the speech of Angels and people, but not for the words attributed to God with the exception of the "Say" passages that the Prophet was invited to transmit to the people.

15) Here is an example of the application of the above rules (S.20: 49-52). First, consider the Arabic text as such:

> He said then who is the Lord of you two o musa (49) he said our lord is he who gave to everything a form and then guided (50) He said then what about the first centuries (51) He said knowledge about them is with my lord in a book my lord errs not nor he forgets (52).

Punctuation and an adjustment of the syntax produces:

49. He said: "Who is your Lord, O Musa?"
50. He said: "Our Lord is the One who gave form to all things as well as guidance."
51. He said: "And what about the former generations?"
52. He said: "Knowledge about them is in my Lord's Book. My Lord doesn't err and doesn't forget."

This passage is further improved by giving it the form which appears in this translation:

49. [Pharaoh]: "O Moses! Who is your Lord?"
50. [Moses]: "Our Lord is the One Who shaped all things
 and then provided Guidance."
51. [Pharaoh]: "And what about the former generations?"
52. [Moses]: "Knowledge about them is in my Lord's Book.
 My Lord doesn't err and doesn't forget!

Note:

In preparing this work, the translator benefited from his simultaneous translation of the Koran into English and Russian. Such an experience offers new possibilities for the art of translation as knowledge of several languages enriches the feeling for the original text and suggests better words and nuances of meaning.

List of Arabic Words and Names in this Translation

(In alphabetical order, without the article ***al,***
indicating the page where they are first encountered or explained)

List of the Suras as They Appear in this Book

(The suras are often named by some word they happen to contain; rarely according to their content; still more rarely by the editorial marks.)

List of the Suras from S.1 to S.114